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Kent on Sunday

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Mid Edition No 620

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One very special mammal needs help
County at forefront of battle to protect our last dormice

RETAIL »

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Supermarkets' land reserves could spell a housing boom

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Searching questions about health service that are still with us

THE question of privatisation has been a loaded and political one for as long as most of us can remember.

It continues to be so. In recent weeks, patients at two GP surgeries run by a private company faced up to the fact that they might not even have a surgery in six months' time.

When the law was changed in 2003, Kent saw a wave of surgeries choosing to move away from NHS control and into the private sector.

For many, this resulted in a faster, more efficient, service, but for some patients elsewhere the privatisation model appears to have been left wanting.

Instead of making things better, it is in danger of leaving those people without something generally regarded as a right.

With an institution that is as crucial to the nation's well-being as the National Health Service, questions have to be answered.

Can it ever be wise to move control of organisations as important as the NHS into private hands?

After all, if it doesn't make money,

a company that has taken over an establishment can choose to move on, theoretically leaving people without a service they need.

There is also the risk of it being run down to cut costs and boost profits.

When something is run to make money, the quickest and easiest way to make more of it is to cut services back to the bone.

As we see more and more pressure on an already-squeezed NHS, we all need to think very carefully about the future of this wonderful institution.

We look at the issue in some depth in this week's paper, where we also reflect on an emotional week capped by Prince Harry's visit to Folkestone to remember those who fell in the First World War.

There is also the subject of supermarkets moving into the world of property development, while for those who enjoy this county's wealth of wildlife there is a study of the iconic dormouse and the efforts to secure its future here.

Go ahead and enjoy!

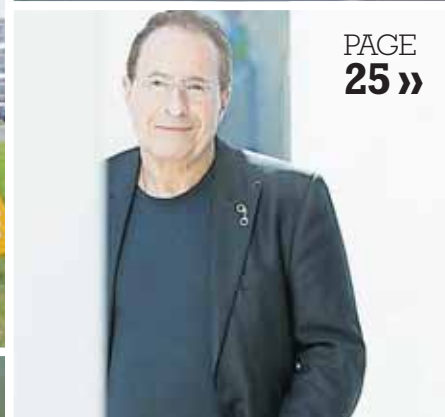
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Tribute paid to 'excellent and committed student'

by Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

TRIBUTES have been paid to a Gillingham student who was stabbed to death in Borneo.

Aidan Brunger, 22, from Hempstead, had been working in the country on a six-week placement from Newcastle University.

A professor from the university described him as a "committed and excellent student with so much potential, who will be greatly missed."

Aidan and a fellow student, Neil Dalton, from Belper in Derbyshire, were working at Sarawack General Hospital in Kuching as part of their medical studies.

Malaysian police said they were killed at about 4.15am local time on Wednesday after an argument about noise in a tea shop.

Aidan and Neil left the tea shop but were followed by four local men. One of them then attacked the students with a knife, a police statement said.

Malaysian police have since arrested four men.

A post-mortem examination had yet to be carried out.



TRAGIC SCENE: A candlelit vigil has been set up at Kuching, where both Aidan and Neil were killed

A former schoolmate of Aidan at Rainham Mark Grammar School, who did not want to be named, told KoS: "I am shocked. He was a nice lad."

KoS contacted the Brunger family, but they were too upset to comment.

Professor Reg Jordan, from Newcastle University, is one of two members of staff from the university now in Kuching.

He said: "Our priority is supporting the families and our

students who are still here. We are working with the authorities to ensure they can return home as soon as possible.

"We met with the students this afternoon and we are giving whatever help we can in these tragic circumstances.

"Neil and Aidan were doing what thousands of medical students do every year – gaining valuable experience overseas.

"They were both excellent and committed students with so much

potential who will be greatly missed by everyone in the medical school. The whole university deeply mourns their loss."

Professor Jane Calvert, from Newcastle University's medical school, said: "Aidan and Neil were excellent students and highly committed.

"Aidan was aspiring to do some medical research on his return to go into medical academia, while Neil was going straight into his final year.

Son's desperate appeal after theft of father's medals from wartime

THE elderly son of a Second World War pilot is desperate for his father's medals to be returned after they were taken from his home.

Neil Arding is pleading for anyone who knows anything to come forward after his father Richard's four medals went missing from his home in Folkestone.

Neil, 72, said: "The medals are a great loss to our family.

"It was a shock to find they had gone. It is distressing for us all. They are part of our history, our memories.

"My mother lives in a nursing home – thank God she's not here, as it would be worse for her. I can't tell her what's happened.

"You feel it's your fault – that you haven't been diligent enough in looking after them."

Richard Arding was awarded the medals, which included the Atlantic Star, for his bravery in the Battle of Britain and in submarine warfare.

When he went missing in action at the age of 25 on January 31, 1944, his son was just 20 months old.

"I don't remember him," said Neil.

"My mother would tell stories about him – how he would often come back with a bullet-hole somewhere.

"I am just hoping that someone somewhere will have the conscience to return the medals. It would be a great godsend to me.

"I would be very grateful – and anonymity would be given to whoever it was."

Cash, bank cards, a sapphire ring with about five stones and a gold watch were also taken in the theft, which is believed to have happened between July 5 and July 16.

Anyone who knows someone who has been trying to sell medals, has been offered them or has any information that might help police should phone 01303 289140, quoting reference number ZY/23393/14, or Crimestoppers free and anonymously on 0800 555 111.

■ A man aged 26 from Folkestone has been arrested on suspicion of theft and bailed until October 13.

Fire-fighters to strike again as pensions fight continues

FIRE-FIGHTERS across Kent are to walk out again this weekend for their second eight-day strike in their long-running pension dispute with the government.

Firemen across the country are to strike from August 9-16.

The Fire Brigades Union is taking the action because of proposed changes to pensions and retirement benefits for firemen. It has called the

changes "a vicious attack on firefighters".

The union says the changes will mean fire-fighters have to work longer and pay more into their pensions and will receive less in retirement. It argues the moves will also see firemen having to work on front-line duties until they are 60.

Crews will still be available to deal with emergencies.

Spate of fires sees crews tell parents: control your kids

FIRE-FIGHTERS have dealt with a spate of blazes across the county this week.

Crews have been called to at least seven fires, including a suspicious blaze in Southfleet involving a caravan and 500 tonnes of straw on fire in Bredgar, both of which took more than 11 hours to tackle.

A number of fires, including one in a Chatham park, have

been started by children and fire crews say parents must make sure they know where their youngsters are.

Medway crew manager Jody Morgan said: "The parents of the children in Chatham thought they were at each others' homes.

"We could really do with help from parents to talk to their kids about the importance of not starting fires deliberately."



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Do you know this man? He's wanted by police

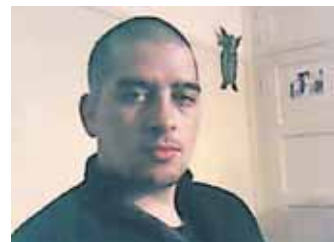
POLICE are looking for this man after a woman was sexually assaulted in a park.

Officers have taken the unusual step of naming Miles Conlon, 22, who is thought to live in the Gravesend area. He is 5ft 6in tall and has short dark hair.

The victim, who is in her 40s, was attacked on Sunday, July 27, in Harlow, Essex. Police issued their appeal on Wednesday.

Detective Inspector Terry Balding said: "We are keen to identify Mr Conlon's whereabouts so we can talk to him and potentially eliminate him from our enquiries."

Anyone who can help find Mr Conlon, or who has information about the assault, should call Essex Police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111, or email SOLT@essex.pnn.police.uk.



Anger as Calais deputy mayor says he'd pay to ship migrants to Dover

Sarah Linney

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THE deputy mayor of Calais says he is so desperate to stop the build-up of migrants in his town that he would pay for their ferry tickets to England.

Philippe Mignonet made the remarks after 48 hours of fighting between migrants of different nationalities in Calais, which saw more than 50 people injured and one man airlifted to hospital with a serious head injury.

According to the BBC, arguments started because different groups of migrants were trying to grab the best spots to smuggle themselves on to lorries bound for Dover.

Mignonet told BBC South East on Tuesday evening that he also wanted to move the UK's border controls back to Dover from Calais.

"We won't have the problem in Calais – and in order to treat the problem in Calais rapidly we would pay for the tickets for the migrants to go to Dover," he said.



DESTINATION: Port of Dover

"I'm quite sure that if we buy a thousand tickets at a time it would cost peanuts. And the ferry-owners might be quite happy to have customers on board, so why not do it?"

His comments were branded as

"highly unhelpful" by Dover MP Charlie Elphicke.

"It's understandable that the Calais authorities would be concerned. They are exasperated by the problem of migrants and the fact that riots have broken out shows how serious matters are," he said.

"But I don't think this is a sensible or responsible suggestion – it would simply move the problem."

"The border controls used to be at Dover 10 years ago and it caused massive problems in the town. If the border controls are in Calais, as soon as an illegal immigrant is picked up they are handed to the French police. If they are in Dover, they go into the British system and they are our problem."

"I have raised the issue with the Home Secretary and made the case for stronger action to be taken by both the British and French governments. But Greece, Italy and Spain are also not carrying out their responsibilities. There needs to be international cooperation in tackling the smuggling gangs behind this."

Vicious thug beat man in his own home

A THUG has been jailed for 14 years for beating a man in his Gravesend home during a Christmas Day robbery.

Marian Csiszar punched his victim in the face, kicked him and demanded cash after he and another man forced their way into the home in Peacock Street at about 7pm on December 25 last year.

Csiszar, of Christianfields Avenue, then forced his screaming victim into his own car and drove him to a cashpoint, continuing to beat him during the journey.

His terrified victim suffered a fractured eye-socket, broken bones in his hand and wrist and a cut to his leg.

Csiszar told police he had drunk three or four bottles of whisky and taken drugs before committing the crimes.

Det Con Steve Gibbins called the attack a "heinous and sustained assault".

"Csiszar tormented his victim and beat him continuously for what must have seemed like a very long time," he said.

"The victim showed great courage in helping us put Csiszar before the courts."

Csiszar was jailed on Monday at Maidstone Crown Court for grievous bodily harm and robbery. He was also given a one-year term for aggravated vehicle-taking, to run concurrently, and a 10-year driving ban.

Officers appeal after stabbing at party

A PARTY in Lower Halstow ended in bloodshed when a Maidstone youth was assaulted.

Police are appealing for information after a 17-year-old suffered a suspected stab wound at about 2.45am on Tuesday.

He had been outside when he became involved in a dispute with three men that turned into a fight.

He was taken by Kent Air Ambulance to a London hospital.

Investigating officer Det Con Nichole Carter said: "I'm appealing to anyone who attended the party to come forward with any information, no matter how small you think it is."

The suspect is white, aged between 18 and 21, about 6ft tall and of heavy build. He was wearing a black hooded top and black shorts.

Anyone with information should phone Det Con Carter on 01634 792637, quoting reference XY/27756/14, or Crimestoppers free and anonymously on 0800 555111.

Robber is jailed after breaking victim's ribs

A ROBBER has been jailed for almost a decade for a brutal attack on a man in his own home.

Luke Page, 28, of Woodbury Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, punched, kicked and stamped on his victim, leaving him with a fractured eye-socket and broken ribs.

He attacked the man after he opened the door to his Sandhurst Road home on Sunday, March 16, demanding his wallet, cash cards and PIN, but the victim refused to tell him anything.

Page stole a television, a games console and a mobile phone.

When officers arrested him at his own home later, he tried to fight them.

Page was jailed for nine and a half years at Maidstone Crown Court on Thursday, July 31, after admitting robbery and grievous bodily harm with intent.

Det Con Rex Dinnage said: "The length of this sentence demonstrates just how violent this attack was."

What punishment is fitting, asks Barnes

KENT police and crime commissioner Ann Barnes is asking the public how they would like to see perpetrators of low-level crime punished.

She has set up an online survey to ask people their views on the best ways to rehabilitate offenders.

Barnes said: "The needs of victims are my absolute focus."

"I want to make sure victims are supported and cared for throughout their experience with the police and feel that the most appropriate and proportionate level of justice has been delivered."

"We would like to hear from as many people as possible to find out whether the remedies we are looking at are the ones that would work for victims."

Options respondents can choose include an apology to the victim, financial compensation, parenting contracts and community punishments.

The survey will run until Sunday, August 31. Visit kent-pcc.gov.uk/annbarneskpcpoll.html.



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A whole new story as Kent on Sunday enjoys its fresh surroundings

KENT on Sunday moved into its new offices earlier last month – so be sure to use our new address when you want to get in contact with us.

After 10 years in Smeeth, we began a new era for your favourite Kent weekend newspaper when we moved into Kent House in the heart of Ashford town centre.

Kent on Sunday's editorial, advertising and distribution teams are now based at the modern new offices, along with colleagues from our sister title, the glossy Kent Life magazine.

From here we will continue to deliver the finest regional newspaper for the entire county, with all the latest news, leisure, sport, business and your one-stop shop for the best offers from our loyal advertisers.

Archant Kent publisher Simon

Irwin said: "We enjoyed a great period of success at Apple Barn, winning a host of awards over the years and firmly establishing ourselves as a class apart for a free newspaper.

"And we continue to evolve, which is why we're now greatly looking forward to starting the next chapter of our success story."

Which means if you want to get in touch, you'll need to now address all correspondence to:

Kent on Sunday, Archant Kent, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1PP. All email addresses remain the same.

Our telephone numbers have changed, too. For all advertising enquiries, call 01233 653461; for editorial, call 01233 653475; for distribution, call 01233 653470.

• This is a revised version of last week's KoS article.



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Royal approval for one town as it remembers the fallen



HRH Prince Harry was watched by thousands of spectators as he unveiled the Step Short Centenary Arch at the top of Folkestone's Road of Remembrance in memory of the millions who went on to live or die on the Western Front. **Rebecca Cooney** reports.

ONE hundred years to the day after the First World War began, His Royal Highness Prince Harry unveiled a memorial arch dedicated to those who had passed through Folkestone on their way to France.

Crowds, which organisers said were much larger than had been expected, gathered along the Leas cliff-top to watch serving soldiers and veterans on parade and catch a glimpse of the prince.

The Step Short memorial arch stretches across The Leas, at the top of the slope down to the harbour, now known as the Road of Remembrance, which is so steep that marching soldiers were told to "step short", taking smaller strides to help them make it safely to the bottom.

Damian Collins, MP for Folkestone and Hythe, told KoS: "It's been a terrific event, we've had a fabulous turnout.

"Prince Harry has asked a lot of questions – he's very interested in the war and asked a lot about Folkestone's role in it.

"We must also thank all of the wonderful volunteers here

today, who have done a great job."

An estimated 10 million soldiers, nurses and civilians embarked on their journey to the battlefields of Europe from Folkestone.

After laying a wreath at the cliff-top cenotaph, Prince Harry followed in their footsteps down the Road of Remembrance to release 600 white balloons in memory of those who never made it back.

John Baxter, from Ashford, said: "We just came down to be part of it – it's something to be remembered and

“It's great that there seem to be so many young people here. They seem to be quite interested – more interested than they used to be”

Keith Gawn,
Spectator at the arch unveiling

it's important to think of and remember all the young men who gave up their lives."

Keith Gawn, from Dover, said: "We would have come regardless of the weather – we wanted to come down and show our respects because the whole thing, the loss of life, is desperately sad.

"It's great that there seem to be so many young people here.

"They seem to be quite interested – more interested than they used to be. I think for a long time schools didn't include it on their syllabus, but that seems to be changing."

Sanjidah Islam, 19, from Folkestone, said: "It's something nice to see in Folkestone. It's going to be quite exciting – I've never been this close to a royal before.

"I think it's important to commemorate people who fought for their country. I think if all the soldiers had lived to see this they would have been pleased."

For some people, attending the event was a personal act of remembrance.

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UNVEILED: HRH Prince Harry was in Folkestone to dedicate the Step Short Centenary Arch as part of the country's commemorations of the start of the First World War, 'the war to end all wars...'

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Robert McPherson, who served in the Gulf War, said: "I'm here to pay my respects to the people who died in the world wars and the people I knew and lost."

"I hope the centenary causes people to think that without this sacrifice they wouldn't be here today and I hope it means they appreciate the sacrifice that people in the armed forces continue to make for them."

The memorial itself is a 17-tonne stainless-steel arch, 14 metres high and 12m wide at the base; it took an

entire day to winch it into position when it was put up last month.

It was commissioned by the Short Step educational charity, which looks to teach young people about the First World War, and has speakers embedded into it with the intention that it can be used as an 'outdoor classroom'.

The arch, which was funded by Kent County Council, Shepway District Council and Folkestone Town Council, has not been without its controversy.

Nick Spurrier, organiser of the Step Too Far campaign, claimed there had

“ It's there to remember all the people who walked this way and lost their lives. I brought my children because I want them to say they were here ”

Rachel Wall,
Who witnessed the unveiling

NTW

been widespread opposition to the arch in Folkestone.

"There was no public consultation," he said. "We already have a war memorial, but this arch has been imposed upon us."

"We object to the use of public money – the funding of any memorial should be through public subscription or private donations, not by local councils."

However, many people attending the unveiling event disagreed.

Rachel Wall, from Folkestone, who had brought her two children, aged six and four, to the event, said: "I

think it's a fitting tribute – it's there to remember all the people who walked through this way and lost their lives."

"I brought my children because I want them to be able to say they were here today."

"It's important they appreciate it. They might not understand it at the moment, but hopefully this is something they'll be able to look back on to help them make sense of the history."

She added: "The arch is an unusual design, but I like it."

Husband and wife Neil and Sarah



ROYAL VISITOR: Prince Harry was joined by serving and former servicemen and women at Monday's ceremony

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Shaw, from Cobham, were divided over the design of the arch.

Mr Shaw said: "I can take it or leave it."

However, Mrs Shaw said: "I think it's quite inventive. It's very modern, which I can see might not be to everyone's taste, but I really like it."

The arch unveiling was followed by an evening event, Keep The Home Fires Burning, showcasing music from the era before a memorial service and torchlit parade.

A bugler will play the Last Post at the commemorative arch every Sunday night until Remembrance Sunday in November.

The event on Folkestone seafront coincided with similar memorial events around the county.

A commemorative service was held at St Mary's Church in Ashford and residents came to light candles throughout the day.

A dawn-to-dusk guard of honour was held by soldiers from the 133 Field Company REME at Ashford's World War One tank in St George's Square and the town's museum held a memorial exhibition featuring child-friendly activities.

Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone opened its exhibition In Their Own Words, which looks at the lives of ordinary people in Kent during the First World War and will run until Friday, October 31.

Many Kent public buildings were joined with residents in the nationwide Lights Out tribute in which lights were put out between 10pm and 11pm to give people the chance to reflect on events a century ago.

The Lights Out initiative was inspired by a comment the night before war broke out by then Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, who said: "The lamps are going out all over Europe – we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."



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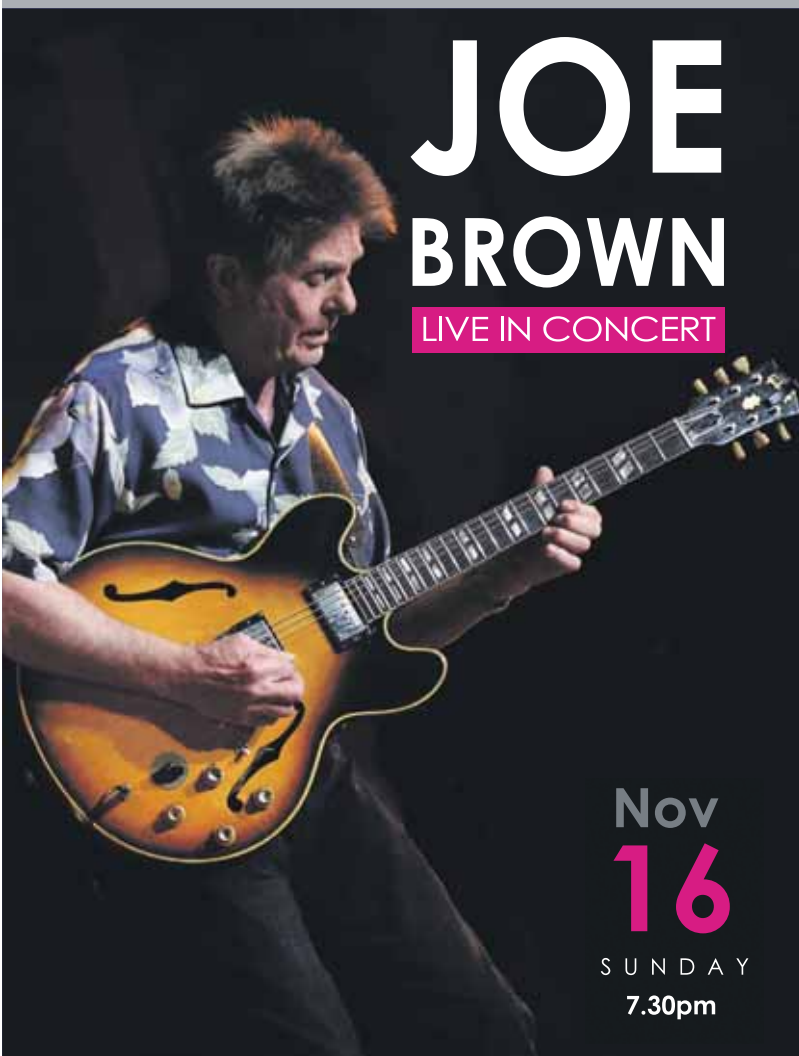


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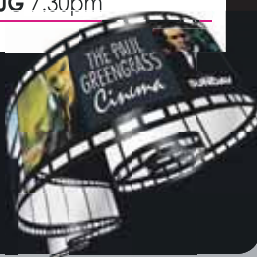
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One of our most fascinating mammals is struggling in today's Kent

Maria Chiorando reports on the dormouse, a symbol of British wildlife still present in this county in healthy numbers. An onslaught of industry, roads and housing, however, means its future here is far from certain.

WITH its distinctive golden-brown fur and enormous black eyes, the dormouse is one of our most instantly recognisable mammals; it is a symbol of British wildlife.

But, like many woodland creatures, it is under threat, with its population in decline.

Dormice used to be widespread throughout the country, but the last 100 years or so has seen a sharp decline and the species is now extinct in some counties.

Fiona Paterson is a spokeswoman from the Wildwood Trust near Canterbury, a wildlife park and conservation charity set in more than 40 acres and housing some 200 native animals, including dormice.

She said: "Our dormouse population is on the decline because of the destruction of its habitat. Habitat fragmentation is also a problem.

"Dormice like to be above ground, in trees and hedgerows, so if their habitat is fragmented by a road, or even by a wide path, they can end up quite isolated as coming to ground makes them feel vulnerable, so they are unlikely to cross it.

"Being isolated can mean it's hard for them to find a mate and they won't reproduce.

"There has also been a change in sympathetic woodland management. This has led to fewer coppicing areas, which can reduce numbers."

Alison Ruyter, of Kent Wildlife Trust, highlighted another issue. "Dormice have a very specific diet," she said. "Unlike most mice, which will eat most things, dormice go for nutrient-dense foods like blackberries and insects.

"They also get used to the food their parents raised them on – you can't take a dormouse that's been raised on insects, for example, and then expect it to live on just hazelnuts.

"If the right food isn't available, they can't get up to the right weight to breed."

Another difference to other mice is the dormouse's digestive system, which can result in its diet being limited.

Hazel Ryan is dormouse training coordinator at the Kent Mammal Group, which works to raise awareness of the county's mammals as well as work towards their conservation.

She said: "They are the only rodents that don't have a caecum – part of the gut that is used to digest parts of plants.

"This means there are a lot of plant parts they can't digest. They mainly eat the flowers.

"Because they can only eat certain parts of

plants, which flower at different times, it is best for them to live in habitat where there is a wide and rich variety of growth so there is always something available for them to eat.

"Honeysuckle is a good plant in dormouse habitat as it is regularly flowering so is one of the few things they can consume.

"They are very fussy, delicate animals."

Dormice do face some danger in the form of predators, but, as Ms Paterson said: "The worst harm done [to them] is by humans, who are more damaging than any of the dormouse's natural predators, through their destruction of the mice's habitat.

"They do have some natural predators, though – mainly owls, possibly foxes and, in some parts of the country, pine martins."

Ms Ryan said: "Because there is low habitat density [few dormice in a given area], it's not really worth a predator's while to go out specially with the intention of dining on dormice.

"Sometimes owls eat them by chance, as they dine on any small mammals.

"But one of the biggest problems is domestic cats – we see a lot of casualties that have been attacked by cats.

"Anyone living near woodland areas with cats could keep their cats indoors overnight to help save wildlife, or try putting a bell on their collars.

"Weasels sometimes attack dormice as they are small enough to fit into their nests. Grey squirrels have also been known to eat dormouse young."

Despite this, population decline has not been equal throughout the country – the species has disappeared entirely from some counties already, while in others numbers have fallen, but not as drastically.

“ The worst harm done is by humans, who are more damaging than any of the dormouse's natural predators, through their destruction of the mice's habitats ”

Hazel Ryan, dormouse training coordinator at the Kent Mammal Group



HIDE AND SEEK: Widespread throughout the country 100 years ago, dormice are in rapid decline and already extinct in some parts of the UK

Ms Ruyter said: "Kent has shown a less steady decline than other areas – the north and west of the country are showing the worst drops.

"There has also been a terrible decline in the Midlands over the last 20 years.

"The South East is a bit of a stronghold, where numbers are at their highest."

Wherever they are, though, numbers are slow to replenish because of how they breed.

Ms Ryan said: "They tend to have small litters, with the average being about four, but they can have as few as one baby or as many as seven.

"Their gestation period is around 25 days, just slightly longer than the three or so weeks of other mice.

"They breed slowly because they tend to only have one litter a year, although occasionally they will have two, but often a second litter won't survive as the babies won't have time to put on enough weight before going into hibernation.

"Most mice do what is known as postpartum mating, which means that as soon as they have given birth they will mate again and have another litter.

"Dormice do not do this – they spend at least two months and generally three with their young, raising them and also teaching them their way around the area.

Ms Ruyter struck a similar tone: "They will nurture their young for much longer than most other types of mice. They are very good mothers and fathers and raise their young carefully.

"The males mainly gather food for the family – they are not as useful as the females in terms of nurturing the babies, but they are the main providers."

A problem for many species is climate change: as temperatures rise and extreme weather such as flooding becomes commonplace, many creatures, like dormice, are affected, with their numbers impacted negatively.

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Ms Rutyer said: "In terms of climate, the mice prefer proper seasons. This is because they hibernate.

"They go into a very deep sleep, where their breathing slows to one breath a minute, their metabolism slows and they don't emit any smells that could alert predators to their presence.

"This means they are burning as little energy as possible and the fat stores they have built up will last for as long as possible.

"It's not good for dormice when winters are mild, as they have been, as they will wake up when it gets a bit warmer and this uses energy.

"Even if they just wake up and go back to sleep, it still uses up energy that they desperately need to conserve during hibernation.

"The length of hibernation can vary but generally starts in late October, going through until March or April.

"They know when to go into hibernation due to day length and temperature.

"Before going into hibernation, they have to fatten up so they have enough energy supplies for winter – they're often so fat that they will look like little cuboids with legs.

"They will emerge in the spring much slimmer after using up the fat stores."

When not hibernating, the mice have ways to conserve their energy.

Ms Ryan said: "When there is not much food available, they can go into a deep sleep called torpor. This is also useful if they can't go out foraging for any other reason.

"For example, their fur is not as



waterproof as most other mice, so they tend to get very waterlogged if they go out when it's raining, making it difficult for them to forage.

"Like in hibernation, in torpor their metabolism slows and body temperature drops, which saves energy. But, unlike hibernation, torpor is short-term and they will only sleep like this for up to 24 hours.

"The only problem is it can take a dormouse around 10 minutes to wake up from torpor, so if predators get into their nests they are very easy prey as they do not have time to wake up properly and take flight before being attacked."

The Wildwood Trust has been working to shore up the falling numbers of dormice throughout the UK by breeding the mice in a specially-built unit before releasing them into the wild.

Ms Paterson said: "We have been doing a very successful breeding pro-

gramme, which has been monitored long-term by the Nottingham Wildlife Trust.

"It's been going since 1992 and will be continuing into the long-term future.

"We carefully select which pairs go together and records are kept in what is called the stud book, which we have here at the trust.

"We have to refer to the book before we get a couple to mate so we don't breed a pair that are somehow related – we don't want to create mice that are inbred and genetically weak."

After being successfully nurtured, the mice will be relocated to new sites, the details of which are often kept under wraps.

It is a fairly complicated procedure, with many caveats to keep in mind to ensure the best survival chances for



the creatures. The dormice are normally released in mid to late-June as if they are released too late in the summer there will be lots of food for them but it will be too late for any babies they have to fatten up enough before they need to go into hibernation.

They are put in pre-release wire cages before being set free, allowing them to become used to their new surroundings.

After some seven to 10 days a small hole is made in a cage so they can start to explore outside.

The frequency of their feeds is cut down so the mice have to start finding their own food until eventually they are entirely independent.

The mice are also micro-chipped in their abdomen before release so they can be monitored into the future.

The Kent Mammal Group also works to monitor and improve numbers.

Ms Ryan said: "We have nesting-box schemes, where we put wooden boxes in trees and volunteers then check them.

"The boxes mimic their natural sites but are a lot easier to monitor. Dormice will often make homes in places like old woodpecker holes, so they can be hard to find.

"We have also been examining unusual habitats, like grass verges by roadsides and churchyards. We have found some living in these places."

There are 300 monitoring sites in the UK, 110 of which are in Kent, making it the country's key area for dormouse monitoring.

To monitor dormice, it is necessary to have a licence, which can be obtained from the Kent Mammal Group.

There are currently 92 licensed dormice monitors in the county.

Most people have never seen, and will never see, a dormouse in the wild.

Ms Paterson said: "They mainly live above head height and they're nocturnal, so it's very rare to spot them.

"It is possible to come and see them here at the trust, which lots of people come and do, as we have built them a little habitat here."

So what does the future hold for the British dormouse?

Ms Ryan said: "I am concerned about the continued fragmentation of their habitat.

"As more railways and roads are built, it will make it harder for the mice to travel, which will make them more isolated.

"In Kent, we still have a relatively good population, but if we keep urban development going at the same pace that may not be the case in the future."

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Is housebuilding next on the list for the big supermarkets?

They spent so long buying land to either build on or to stop others from opening stores that the big chains are sitting on large reserves of land, as **Jamie Weir** reports

AFTER years of growth in big edge-of-town superstores, few would have predicted that Tesco would switch its focus to building houses next.

Yet that is the unlikely latest twist in the saga of the supermarket, which may be dipping into its property portfolio in a change of business tack.

Tesco's land bank – comprising tracts of undeveloped land it has acquired over the years – could be transformed into some 4,000 homes nationwide.

And there is, suffice to say, plenty of Tesco-owned land in Kent.

A subsidiary of the supermarket giant is the development company Spenhill, which means the land could be developed in-house.

It may not quite be a case of putting a property in your trolley, but it does mark a significant change for a firm that has been such a significant player in the county in recent years.

So why is it now looking to either develop or – as is potentially more likely – simply sell off the land it has been accruing for so long?

In short, it is the result of a changing market-place and a need to adapt to a different environment and our changing shopping habits.

It is also, of course, fuelled by a dip in profit.

Tesco stated recently that its policy was to move away from large superstore development, instead focusing on its smaller Metro offerings in town centres. This move comes after dwindling growth reduced its group annual trading profit by 6 per cent to £3.3 billion.

Make no mistake, that profit remains enormous. But the supermarket firm – and it is certainly not alone among its big-name rivals – is desperate to retain upward growth in the race to consume a giant slice of our grocery spend.

And it's where we make that spend that is so significant. Clive Black, head of research at city stockbroker Shore Capital, told KoS that although the large retailers still "dominated the grocery scene", their free run had essentially come to an end.

That means that they are having to look to other areas for profit, and one of those areas comprises the large land banks they have built up.

Dr Black said: "This was the decade where the progress of the hypermarket hit a brick wall. We've seen the march of the big international supermarket groups come to an end."

"Tesco's land sales represent a change in the retail industry's outlook."

"Housing demand in the South East is very high, so that may be a prime candidate for alternative use."

As a nation, our shopping habits have changed. Rather than trips to out-of-town megastores, we have started travelling shorter distances and more often.

This means that supermarkets are moving back into town centres – ironically after playing such a large

role in destroying them by dragging shoppers out of them.

And that spells a different approach to the way in which they operate.

Before this year, Tesco had been committed, alongside other major retailers such as Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons, to what was known as the 'race for space'.

In the early part of the decade, the supermarket giants were all battling for customers in an increasingly-crowded marketplace.

That race for space resulted in retailers purchasing huge tracts of land throughout the country, with much of it bought in the population-dense South East.

The supermarkets bought land so they could develop it into new stores, or, as was often the case, so that they could block competitors from doing so.

However, as the retailers cut back from developing large new stores,

“ We have decided to reduce the amount of new store space we build each year, building fewer large stores, but we are a major employer ”

Tesco, on its role as an investor and employer in the county



DIGGING IN: Is the next move for the big supermarkets to sell their property reserves or build houses themselves

these land banks that they held built up. With the trend against bigger stores, the option facing Tesco *et al* now is what to do with that land.

Selling it off for housing is a clear option.

To put the trend into context, Tesco has stated that it expects to develop only 700,000 square feet of retail space this year – that's down from the 1.4 million sq ft it developed last year, and 2.5 million sq ft a year at the

height of its meteoric expansion.

It is that withdrawal from major developments that has also put paid to a number of schemes in the county, including those cited as key to regenerating areas.

One such project was in Sittingbourne, where the company had stated that it would help to regenerate a big part of the town with a mixed-use development that included one of its superstores.

Pete Raine, Swale Borough Council's director of regeneration, told KoS about the development proposal.

He said: "We were negotiating with Tesco from 2003 until 2012. They had a large chunk of land in an area which badly needed regeneration and seemed committed to the idea of a large new development in the area that would have seen one of their supermarkets built."

"Between 2003 and 2012 there

was an expectation that this development would go ahead. In 2012, the company changed its strategy and informed us that it wouldn't be progressing the scheme as we were expecting. That left a large 45-acre site owned by Tesco unused.

"It failed to deliver and that meant that Sittingbourne regeneration was held back, maybe by a couple of years."

Don't expect to see Tesco shrinking any time soon, though. This is all about targeted growth rather than simply pursuing a now apparently-exhausted 'build big' strategy.

Tesco insists that it is committed to the county.

A supermarket spokesman told KoS it felt that it did "a fantastic job serving local communities across the county".

He said: "We have decided to reduce the amount of new store space we build each year, building fewer large stores, but we are a major investor and employer in Kent."

It employs more than 6,500 employees spread across 50 stores in the county and insists it is wholly committed to those stores it has.

It has already developed, through its Spenhill subsidiary, a residential site that it had planned to use as a supermarket into luxury apartments in Faversham.

The Old Brewery redevelopment in Faversham brought 23 flats into the market. And the company is still sitting on those 45 acres in Sittingbourne.

Development of houses here wouldn't be a problem for Swale council's Pete Raine.

He said: "The area needs housing and actually Swale Borough Council



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would welcome development on this site. It's a previously-developed brownfield site and we would see a housing development here as much better than one on an undeveloped site somewhere else."

Countryside campaign group CPRE Kent also says that it sees potential positives to the Tesco land bank... but also drawbacks.

Vicky Ellis, a spokeswoman for the organisation, said: "The issue largely depends on the location of the land that Tesco wants to develop.

"If it is on brownfield land, then that's likely to be a development we'd support if it saved another site in open countryside.

"However, if they planned to build on a greenfield site just because it was a piece of land bought by Tesco either to build a supermarket on, or to block another supermarket from building there, it would not mean it was suitable for housing by default.

"CPRE Kent believes the Tesco land bank needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis."

And it looks as though Tesco has plans for Kent, although currently it is unwilling to share quite what they might be, or, for that matter, where its land-banked sites are located in the county.

Its spokesman said: "At this stage we're not in a position to confirm exactly how many houses will be developed or where in Kent.

"However, we are planning 99 residential units alongside our store as part of our scheme in Dartford."

That scheme will be part of what seems to be a growing trend for supermarkets – the mixed-use development, where the retailer will build a store and either top it with flats



TOWN CENTRE: The Tesco Metro in Tunbridge Wells... more and more shoppers shy away from the bigger stores

or deliver housing on the same site. Tesco is not the only company to be involved in this type of development. Upmarket retailer Waitrose, which has 13 stores in the county, has done this for a number of years.

Its store in Ashford has flats on top of it.

A spokesman for Waitrose said: "We do play a part in mixed-use developments on some of our new stores. These schemes can often be a

strong business opportunity and if they are we will engage with the development."

However, as a supermarket chain that has only recently seen a period of strong growth, it claims not to have a land bank and, unlike many of the bigger retailers, is still looking to open superstores.

Its modus operandi has, in recent

years, been to move into existing sites, often replacing previous supermarket tenants.

The spokesman said: "We haven't tried to over-reach ourselves and that's meant that Waitrose has seen strong, consistent growth.

"We are still looking to open stores throughout Kent. We only have 319 stores across the UK, so there's still quite a bit of room for us to expand."

But supermarket retailers other

“ We regularly review our portfolio to ensure sites that are no longer part of our development plans are sold. We build mixed developments across the county ”

Sainsbury's, on not having a policy of storing up land banks

than Tesco also have land banks – even if they're unwilling to call them that. Sainsbury's is also sitting on a tranche of sites after it took part in the race for space – although, rather than turning them into housing, it says that it simply sells them on to developers.

A spokesman for the company said: "Sainsbury's does not have a policy of land-banking.

"The development process is often a lengthy one, from acquiring a site, gaining all the necessary permissions, to building a store, but we regularly review our portfolio to ensure sites that are no longer part of our development plans are sold.

"We do build mixed developments across the county in partnership with developers. Where we do that, it is to get the greatest value out of our retail space.

"It can also help to meet housing needs in areas which don't have enough."

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The supermarket said to KoS that it was committed to the county and had plans to bring forward new stores in Kent. However, it has in the past done what Tesco did in Sittingbourne.

Recently it pulled out of two development proposals in Canterbury and Tonbridge.

When the Tonbridge development fell apart in April this year, it was a hefty blow to the council. The proposed redevelopment of the area by Sainsbury's would have resulted in an £85 million investment by the retailer, kick-starting a whole raft of regeneration in the area.

Councillor Nicholas Heslop, the Conservative leader of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, said: "It seems to me Sainsbury's decided to take a short-term view of their property and ignored the longer-term investment potential."

"That is particularly misguided in Tonbridge, where their existing store is unattractive, tired and generally of poor quality."

"An injection of investment and new retail stores was what we have been aiming at."

"The proposed leisure and community centre in Bradford Street was to be wholly funded from the proceeds of the major development."

"Without a similarly major scheme, it is highly unlikely that a new investor could be found to fund the building of the centre."

The changing fortunes of the big supermarkets have led to this reluctance to bring forward new store proposals.

Both Tesco and Sainsbury's now say they are angling to fight for space on the high street – but, after years of taking trade to the large superstores out of town, some are worried that a return could do damage to the few remaining shops on some of the county's high streets.

Jo James, chief executive of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, spoke to KoS about her concerns.

She said: "Independent traders on our county's high streets aren't able to provide the mass scale which the big supermarkets can and if they make a return to high streets we could see them struggle to survive the increased competition."

"These independents are what make people want to come to the high street – they are interesting and bring variety."

"If they are pushed out, you have to wonder what the future will be for town centres."

But she also said that this return could in fact help draw people towards town centres – it just depended on whether shoppers were already able to buy their groceries there or not.

Ms James said: "It's difficult to say quite what will happen with supermarkets returning to high streets with their smaller stores."

"Some town centres don't have places that shoppers can pick up their groceries, so in some cases these shops could fulfil shoppers' needs and also bring footfall to town centres which are struggling."

"Where this would be a great shame is in towns which saw independent food retailers shunted out of business by aggressive competition from big stores."

THE IMPACT OF LAND-BANK DEVELOPMENT IN THIS COUNTY

SO just what could this off-loading of land mean to the county's housing market?

Matthew Ryde is an associate partner at the Howard Cundey estate agency in Tonbridge.

He said: "With the demand for property that's out there in the county, it's unlikely to be anything but a good thing. New homes being released tends to trigger moving so brings resales to the market and opens up opportunities again for buyers."

However, Ryde did qualify this, saying that the impact may vary depending on the sites themselves.

He said: "The key is where and what is being developed. The size of sites and social-housing needs for developments all affect desirability. But there aren't many areas in the South East where estate agents are complaining they have too much stock. In fact, the reverse is generally true."

"An increase in available property will also help with bringing balance between supply and demand to the market, although it slowly seems to be finding equilibrium already."

"The resulting greater choice for buyers if landbanks are developed may not be what every vendor wants, but supply and demand has taken property prices to a high level and one that has caused talk of interest-rate changes to cool the 'housing bubble.'"



Ryde was also positive about the impact that land-bank development could have for sellers who are looking to buy another house in the county.

He said: "Those who are selling but will also be buying back into the market-place will also probably appreciate a more sensible buying market-place."

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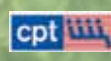


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THE CHANGING FACE OF OUR SUPERMARKETS

RETAIL behaviour has altered since the start of the UK's credit crisis. Shoppers have moved away from spending large sums during a big weekly shop, and towards smaller, irregular shopping trips.

Adam Leyland, editor at The Grocer, a trade publication for the retail industry, says this shift means that large stores no longer do the kind of business they used to.

He said: "People are spending little and often to preserve cash. The rising cost of fuel also makes trips in the car to out-of-town shopping centres less attractive, with the big shop dying. Internet shopping is also having an impact. People are able to see the total of their groceries as they shop and it is convenient for them."

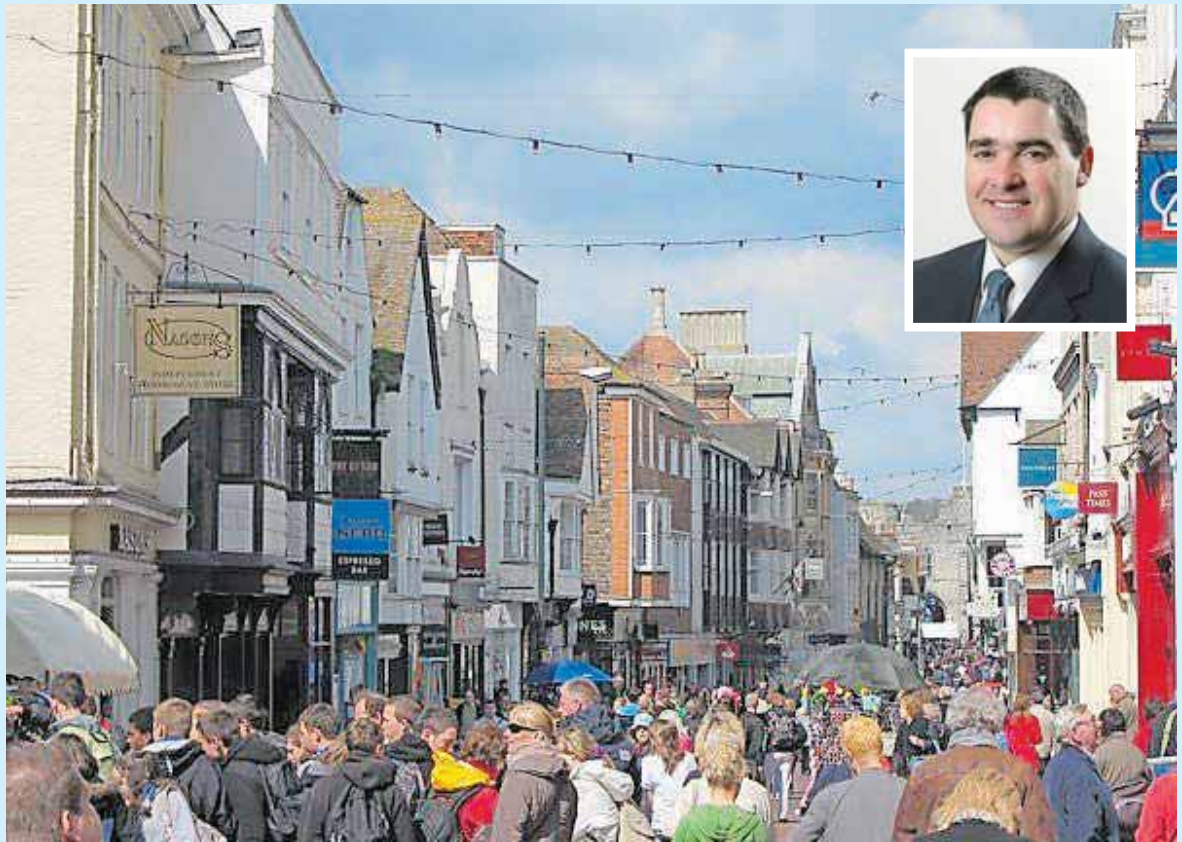
"In a world where people have less time, shopping online makes sense as there's no worry about getting to a store, and it can be quicker and cheaper as people are less likely to browse. They can also compare prices quickly and easily."


Clive Black (inset), an analyst from city stockbroker Shore Capital, said: "Supermarkets' ambitions in non-food have also been materially curtailed as specialists and online are more effective."


This has led to retailers providing much smaller stores. Tesco has its Metro range, while Sainsbury's has its Local stores.

Waitrose is getting in on this and has started opening what it calls 'little Waitrose' branches – these are much smaller than the 29,000 sq ft offerings, clocking in at between 2,000 and 6,000 sq ft.

These stores have a greater focus on food and forego offerings such as electricals, which take space in the larger superstores.







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Colleges look to a bright new



K College's demise as a flagship of further education has seen two other centres of learning take the reins...

TO say that K College had a troubled history is a bit like saying the Royal Family are rich.

When, in 2010, five further-education colleges across Kent were merged into one, it was intended to be the county's biggest further-education establishment – a powerhouse of learning.

But after the college racked up debts of £17 million, principal Bill Fearon and several of the governors resigned, a temporary management team was brought in and, less than four years after its inception, the Skills Funding Agency proposed that K College be sold.

On Friday, August 1, the campuses were taken over and have moved into the hands of two experienced and successful Kent establishments.

The Ashford, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells campuses are being run by rural specialist Hadlow College, based in the village of the same name near Tonbridge, while the Folkestone and Dover campuses have been taken over by East Kent College, based in Thanet.

Here **Sarah Linney** speaks to both to find out how they plan to turn the colleges around...

HADLOW COLLEGE

A RURAL and agricultural college might seem an odd choice to take over a trio of general further-education colleges and knock them into shape.

But look at Hadlow's ratings and you'll understand exactly why it has been chosen.

Graded as 'outstanding' by Ofsted, praised by the Quality Assurance Association for Higher Education, the winner of a Kent Excellence in Business award and holder of Investors in People gold status, this is a college that knows what it's doing.

Hadlow won't be stamping its specialism on the three campuses it is taking over, though; they will keep their own identities and won't see any 'ruralisation' of their curriculum.

The Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells campuses will be known as West Kent College, with the Ashford campus named Ashford College.

"We have made the commitment that we aim to run all the programmes in the current prospectuses at all three campuses, subject to demand," said director of finance and resources Mark Lumsdon-Taylor.

"Long-term, we want to develop and enhance the curriculum, but we are not going to do anything unless it is high quality and we have to fix the core business first. We will be investing in key parts of the curriculum and investing in the campuses."



Principal Paul Hannan added: "They [the colleges] will be branded as part of the Hadlow Group, but we are keeping the names, so they still have those individual identities."

"Parents are not interested in the governing structure – they just want what's best for their child."

"They will all be part of one big, happy group."

Hadlow has already been helping to run the colleges it is taking over for five months, chairing management meetings, holding training days and introducing new procedures for everything from teaching to finance.

Its target is for its new campuses to achieve a 'good' Ofsted rating within two years. And Hadlow knows very well that is a tall but achievable order – because 11 years ago it was in a similar position.

The college was graded 'inadequate' by Ofsted in November 2003 but turned things around to be rated 'good' in December 2005 and 'outstanding' in 2010.

"This is a college that is coming from a position of fantastic strength," Mr Lumsdon-Taylor said.

"We have financial solvency and we have systems and processes we know work. The Skills Funding Agency has confidence in us."

"We have an established senior management team who have gone through this process before."

"We treat the college as a business, but our business is high-quality teaching and learning."

"I think it's testament to us that as a land-based specialist we are acquiring a general further-education college, which is actually quite rare."

The Ashford site in Jemmett Road will remain open and be redecorated and refurbished, but the college is also working with the council on plans to develop a building in Elwick Road.

The Jemmett Road building might eventually have to be sold to pay for the new site, but that is not the plan at the moment and both may well end up staying open.

And Hannan and Lumsdon-Taylor say that staff at all three colleges welcome the takeover.

"The staff have been excellent – they

have been really receptive to change," Hannan said.

"Some of them only found out what was going on at the college through the newspapers."

"People had spent their own money buying things for their students because they care so much. But that's not how you run a college – the college should be paying for things. No one wants to work in a college that has a bad reputation. I have never met a teacher who doesn't want the best for their pupils."

"We have a simple objective: to make sure the students get a decent deal as they have had some pretty unfortunate experiences over the last few years."

"When we say we are going to set out and do something, we are going to do it. Come hell or high water, we will get it right."

EAST KENT COLLEGE

EXCITING plans are in the pipeline for the Folkestone and Dover campuses taken over by East Kent College.

A myriad of new courses designed to fit the economic needs of both areas is planned for the next few years.

And so keen is the college to welcome its two new campuses into the fold with open arms that it has moved its head office and administrative functions from Broadstairs to the Discovery Park [the former Pfizer site], just north of Sandwich, so all three colleges feel equal.

The trio will also be known as East Kent College.

From this year, the construction courses at Folkestone will include brickwork and plastering. There will also be a creative-media centre, teaching subjects like graphic design and digital media, to complement Folkestone's Creative Quarter.

There are also plans to reintroduce early-years provision and social-care courses, but perhaps most impressively next year the college will have a commercial salon and restaurant on site.

"We want to enable our students to learn in real working environments – we are creating a commercial hotel at the Broadstairs campus – so we will be

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running those centres on a commercial basis," said Paul Sayers, strategic director of corporate services.

"When there's a real need in the area but there aren't the immediate employment opportunities we are creating them for our students.

"There are a good number of young people in the Dover and Folkestone areas who are travelling out of those areas for their further education.

"We know there is a market there and that we can attract those stu-

dents back with relevant courses."

Both campuses will also be refurbished, with Dover getting a new learning centre and catering area and upgraded IT facilities.

Long-term plans include courses in engineering, logistics and hospitality, as well as motor vehicles, plumbing and sustainable construction, complementing the work done at the Thanet campus on environmental technologies.

"There is a real synergy between

what we are doing here in Thanet and what we want to do in Folkestone and Dover," said Sayers.

"We are really keen to move on from the legacy of K College as quickly as possible and make sure that whatever we do meets the needs of the local economy and is training our students for jobs here.

"Both campuses have suffered from a lack of investment and our initial focus is about bringing them back up to scratch and making them attractive.

"Ten years ago they were both very successful campuses – we are very passionate about the fact we can make them successful again."

The college, which has about 2,200 students at its campus in Broadstairs and is rated 'good' by Ofsted and 'outstanding' for its leadership and management, sees more than 90 per cent of its students go into further learning or a job.

"That's something we are really proud of – and which we think the

Folkestone and Dover campuses deserve, too," Sayers said.

"We have had such positive support for our proposals from both campuses, which we are really grateful for.

"The staff have been really positive and we are actually recruiting about 40 additional staff. People are focusing on growth, rather than reductions in various things.

"There is a general mood of excitement and optimism. It seems everyone is behind the same vision now."



NEW CURRICULUM: The K College site in Tonbridge (above left), Hadlow College's Mark Lumsdon-Taylor (top) and Paul Sayers from East Kent College (above).

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The battlefields of the Great War were littered with the bodies of those killed by machine guns... and, as **Chris Murphy** discovers, many of these deadly weapons were built at a factory in nearby Crayford

THE Great War killing fields of Ypres and Flanders were the scene of some of the worst bloodshed this world has ever seen... and many of the weapons used on them were made by workers from Kent.

They were the employees of Vickers, a steel company launched in the 18th century in Sheffield that went on to produce the famed fire-spitting weapon of death – the machine gun.

Production went full steam ahead as the war erupted and staff at the Crayford factory worked flat out.

The nature of a war in trenches, with each side taking it in turns to rush the other, meant that whoever could fire more bullets would win.

Vickers quickly moved into armaments in 1888 after coming into contact with inventor Hiram Maxim. In 1884, the Maxim Gun Company was founded, with shares owned by Vickers.

Maxim had come up with a method of rapidly firing large-calibre bullets; it was a move away from the Gatling-gun layout.

The works at Crayford were chosen to begin production.

In 1887, the Erith firms of Nordenfeldt and Maxims were combined to form the Maxim Nordenfeldt Gun and Ammunition Company.

This lasted a decade before Vickers bought the Naval Construction and Armaments Co at Barrow and Maxim Nordenfeldt.

The Boer War kept all busy with healthy order books, but as peace broke out in South Africa at the start of the 20th century the trade dropped off markedly.

In 1907, the Crayford workforce started building cars, but that too ended in 1910 when manufacture was moved to Birmingham.

Crayford looked doomed, but bosses eyed the political unrest in Europe.

And then the First World War broke out and the Crayford production lines were once more in full swing producing the means of killing men in high volumes.

Vickers became an industrial force in the region, creating more jobs and increasing the local population.

Orders for its guns rocketed in 1914 and the Barnes Cray estate was built by an organisation connected with Vickers to house many of the 12,000 people employed by the firm.

By this time, the original Maxim machine gun had been developed and its killing power improved. Weapons such as the FB5, also known as the gun bus, could even be used on aircraft.

The Vickers gun was instrumental in the First World War. It could kill quicker and more accurately than just about anything else other than a direct artillery strike.

But in a quirk that favoured Vickers and not the Allied troops, the company had long before licensed the gun to the Germans.

So it came to be used in opposite trenches, killing soldiers on both sides

It fired rounds from a canvas belt that carried 250 of them and could be emptied in just 30 seconds. The belts were kept clean and dry in ammunition boxes and had tongues that a loader just pushed through a slot in the gun.

Pull the other side, the first bullet engaged. Pull back on a sliding safety catch to prime the gun and the man on the twin handles could squeeze the trigger.

Mark Smith, curator at the Royal Artillery Museum, said: "It really was a simple gun to use."

Peter Yealands at the In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, added: "Cavalry were used in the war of movement in the early days, but two or three men with a well-placed machine gun meant they had no chance."

"The machine gun, in effect, helped create the trenches because the war of movement had to stop. They were mown down by the guns."

So what was life like with a Vickers? George Coppard was 16 when he lied about his age and signed up in 1914.

He was badly wounded and won the Military Medal for bravery, but he also wrote about his experiences facing the German machine guns.

In July 1916, at the Battle of the Somme, the Allies spent a week sending 1.7 million artillery shells into German positions to finally wipe them out and end a stalemate... but they were hiding deep underground.

The Allied guns stopped and troops were sent to finish the job. But the charge was met with a barrage of machine-gun fire from the German soldiers who had emerged from their bunkers.

Coppard wrote of the gruesome scene: "The Germans always had a commanding view of No Man's Land. The attack had been brutally repulsed. Hundreds of dead were strung out like wreckage washed up to a high-water mark. Quite as many died on the enemy wire as on the ground, like fish caught in a net"

“ Hundreds of dead were strung out like wreckage washed up to a high-water mark. Quite as many died on the enemy wire as on the ground, like fish caught in a net ”

George Coppard,
On life in the trenches

wire as on the ground, like fish caught in a net.

"They hung there in grotesque postures. Some looked as if they were praying; they had died on their knees and the wire had prevented their fall. Machine-gun fire had done its terrible work."

The Crayford factory towards the end of the war was also turning out aircraft such as the Vickers Vimy. It seems that just a dozen were actually built as peace broke out.

As an aside, it is widely believed that one of these 12 planes was used by Alcock and Brown in June 1919 to fly across the Atlantic.

Vickers was forced to lay off much of its workforce, which shrank to 3,500, and new products were made, such as gas meters and motor parts.

Aircraft production moved from to Weybridge in 1919 and the machine-gun factory is now a retail park and marked by a small plaque.

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Something wicked this way comes ... but it might make you laugh



WRITE STUFF:
Author Peter James

Best-selling crime author Peter James talks to **David Mairs** about the translation of his book *The Perfect Murder* into a stage production as well as the concept of evil

THERE'S no drug that will give someone a conscience."

Which is a shame for the unfortunate souls targeted by those with murder on their mind as lack of conscience is an apparent prerequisite for many of those who are able to take the life of another in cold blood.

Sober stuff maybe, but it's the stock in trade of Brighton's Peter James, one of the most successful writers of crime-thrillers in the world and the man behind *The Perfect Murder*, which comes to Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre next month.

With book sales of more than 14 million and his tales of detective Roy Grace having been published

in 36 languages, it's perhaps surprising that this is the first of his works to have been adapted for the stage.

Even given the confidence that must come from this particular novella having spent 15 weeks at No 1 and staying almost a year in the iBook Top 10, it takes a leap of faith to place your work in the hands of others.

One of those others is producer Joshua Andrews, who joined James at The Marlowe for a public discussion, together with Dawn Steele, who plays the part of Joan Steele, whose marriage to Victor (Robert Daws) has, it is fair to say, reached the point of no return.

Both protagonists have reached much the same wholly unpleasant

conclusion... the only difference being who plays which role.

The primary role of adapting *The Perfect Murder* for the stage, however, fell to Shaun McKenna, and he was tasked with translating both the humour and the excitement from James's work to the environment of the theatre.

For this is a comedy thriller, in itself a departure for James. And so well has the project worked that its visit to The Marlowe will represent the start of an extension to a run that began in January with a different cast to that the Marlowe audience will be seeing.

"It's dark but very funny," said Andrews. "After the first week we knew this was the atmosphere we wanted to get out there. The

demand for a second leg has been overwhelming after the success of the first.

"It was a challenge – it's a comedy, but it's about murder. There's someone being wrapped up in bin-liners and it's the sheer banality of it all. The first time we saw it we had tears down our eyes.

"Peter was brilliant in allowing us to make what would work as a stage play. Some authors think their word is gospel, but he'd say 'Yeah, I understand why you'd do that'. It was a collaborative effort and my most enjoyable working experience for years."

Steele, from Glasgow but now "a local girl" (she lives in Whitstable),

Continued on page **27** »

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« Continued from page 25

was similarly enthused.

"I absolutely loved it and now I'm looking forward to being in this gorgeous theatre," she said.

"I thought I'd be reading a really dark crime piece, but it wasn't – it was really funny. It was a case of 'My wife doesn't understand me, so I'm going to kill her'.

"The audiences have varied. Some are not sure whether they should be laughing, but they all eventually realise it's a dark comedy."

As for the man himself, it would seem he never had any qualms about the transition to stage.

"I always trusted Josh's taste –

66 Nobody sees more of life than a cop. They have warrant cards and can go anywhere. They see every facet. 99

never any concerns," he said. "He came up with something more theatrical, otherwise it would have been like watching paint dry.

"I've seen it about 20 times now and I'm loving it."

So happy days all round, but just to get a tiny bit po-faced for a while, should murder really be a source of entertainment, whether as comedy or otherwise?

"People fascinate us," said James. "As does the constant battle between good and darkness."

And you couldn't accuse the author of taking murder lightly, his research into the subject over the years having been exhaustive.



CLOSE TO HOME: Actress Dawn Steele, who lives in Whitstable, is looking forward to appearing at The Marlowe

He enjoys a healthy relationship with the police, particularly with the New York, Metropolitan and Sussex forces, the latter being his home constabulary.

Some of this developed through

serendipity, the most striking example being when his home was targeted by thieves.

"I can strongly recommend being burgled shortly after getting married... all those awful porcelain

ornaments you were given."

The value to the author of being able to speak to our officers of the law almost goes without saying.

"Nobody sees more of life than a cop. They have warrant cards and

can go anywhere. They see every facet of human existence. Once they realised I wasn't always out to get a story to flog to the newspaper, they became increasingly helpful."

Arguably, however, nothing teaches more about the criminal mind than speaking to the criminals themselves, and James has ensured he has more than a passing familiarity with their ways.

He speaks of the illicit side of the antiques trade as "the beating heart of Brighton's villainy", of the career burglar he used as a character and who worked to the principle that it took the same amount of time to "do a posh house as a poor house"... and of an introduction to Marbella's ex-pat British criminal fraternity.

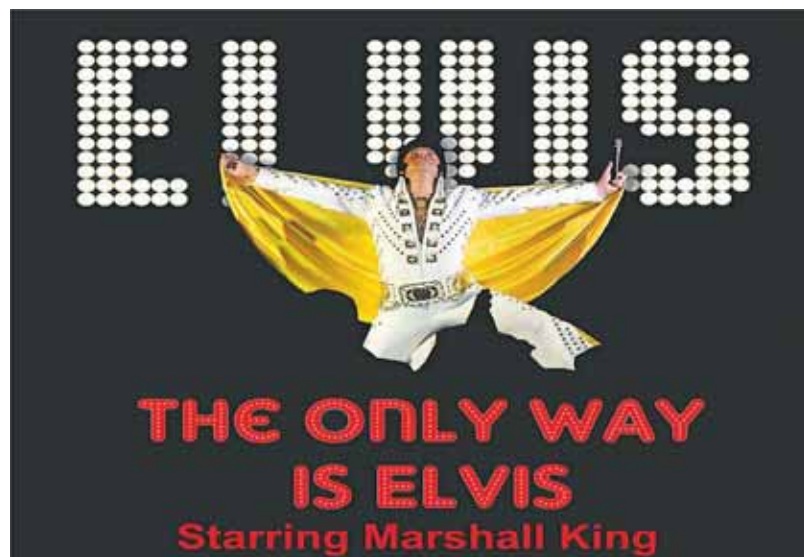
"Six guys who looked like they were out of Straw Dogs came in," he said. "The conversation went to the cost of getting someone whacked [killed] and the advice was to give a Moroccan Bin Laden a €500 note – they could live two years on that."

Closer to home, perhaps in every sense, James has come to perceive his environment differently, largely as a result of his time spent with police officers.

"It's from neighbourhood policing," he said. "You see faces and actions, life, in a different way. That guy in that car looks wrong, or I see a man standing in the wrong way. If cops are playing golf, they'll say that bloke over there doesn't look like a man who plays golf."

Maybe that's something we all do to some degree, but there are surely few of us who have delved as deeply as James into the very darkest

Continued on page 28 »



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Marshall King back in 2009 was awarded the Best Elvis Tribute artist on ITV in the UK and since then has risen to be one of the most elite tributes of the world with performances spanning as far as the USA and Europe. Apart from his superb vocal impression he also complete the illusion that Elvis is on stage with an amazing transformation including genuine outfits made in the USA by costume makers using the original Elvis designs. Marshall has painstakingly studied the mannerisms and movements capturing the complete Presley performance. He has a warm and humorous on stage persona where he manages to capture the man as well as the performer with a very respectable performance to the king himself, never forgetting there was only one King of Rock and Roll.

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« Continued from page 27

recesses of human behaviour.

"I was doing research and I finally got into Broadmoor [psychiatric hospital] – it had taken me a year. I asked the chaplain if something happened to turn people evil.

"He said that murderers essentially fell into two categories.

"There were schizophrenics, those with a chemical imbalance in the brain such as [Yorkshire Ripper] Peter Sutcliffe who might think they hear voices from God. They can be cured as long as they stay on their medication.

"And there are psychopaths or sociopaths, who are born without the conscience that most of us have.

"How they turn out depends on their parenting... for example, how do they deal with the boy of four who takes his best friend's toys."

Such characters don't, thankfully, all develop into murderers. Indeed, believes James, many go on to assume positions at the peak of society.

"These are people who would do anything to get up there," he said. "A lot of our captains of industry are sociopaths, while I think you can see these behaviour patterns in people like Tony Blair, George W Bush and Robert Mugabe.

"We are a culmination of how we are brought up and what values we are given.

"There's no one answer, though. An unhappy family life, sexual abuse, broken homes or bullying parents can all play their part, but some people have warm, nurturing parents and still go on to kill."

And does James believe in the



THE PERFECT PRODUCTION?

The previous run of the play, starring Les Dennis, was a big hit

concept of evil?

"Yes, there are people who are evil by the definition of our standards.

"I was talking to a warder working

“I realised I was in the presence of someone evil. Whether the evil is from without or within is another question.”

with killers at a maximum-security prison and he said you would look into their eyes and there's nothing

there – some of them are just staring at you.

"On another occasion I spoke to a woman who had embezzled her mother-in-law's bank account for nine and a half years and been jailed. She said 'It's just not fair'. I realised I was in the presence of someone evil.

"Whether the evil is from without or within is another question."

Given his exposure to such darkness, this author of 26 novels comes across remarkably jauntily.

"Policemen become jaded about human nature, but I'm a natural optimist," he said before offering a

relatively detached view of the act of murder.

"It's a line you cross and you cannot go back – it's the one crime for which there's no restitution. If you beat someone up, there's always some recompense, but there can never be that with taking a life."

The background study has been intense and has clearly played a big part in James's phenomenal success, but can he offer guidance to those who believe they are only few sessions at the keyboard away from joining him on the Pantheon of great writers?

"There are 200,000 books

published every year, but you're lucky if 200 go on to do well. The onus is on the writer to remember that competition.

"The style of writing today is different to 200 years ago. Now you have to grab someone with the first sentence and not let them go.

"I get 10 requests a week to read books. I'm not that fast a reader. I have a test: I read the first line. I think you can tell what a book will be like in the first paragraph.

"Brighton Rock [by Graham Greene] is the book that changed my life and made me want to be a writer. That first line...

"Who's Hale? Why are they in Brighton? Why are they going to murder him?"

So we're back to murder again and, given James's assertion that it's not actually that difficult a process – "we have all the means at our disposal – it's perhaps surprising that there isn't more of it.

"What stops us is our conscience – not being able to live with it."

As we have established, it's those who lack conscience we have to watch out for. And without that drug with which we began this tale, danger must always lurk, potentially at least. Does this never trouble Peter James?

"I sleep well. It's my readers..."

■ **The Perfect Murder is at The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, from Tuesday to Saturday, September 2-6, at 7.30pm (there are 2.30pm matinees on the Thursdays and Saturdays).**

Tickets, priced from £16-£31.50 (concessions available; booking fee applies), are from the box office on 01227 787787 or alternatively at www.marlowetheatre.com.

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Competition

Win tickets to witness Perfect Murder at Marlowe Theatre

...plus signed collection of books from author **Peter James**

THE first stage adaptation of the work of international best-selling crime thriller novelist Peter James comes to The Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury next month.

With its darkly comic and thrilling storyline, *The Perfect Murder* was a huge success on the first leg of its tour earlier this year.

Now set for an extended run, which opens at The Marlowe on Tuesday, September 2, it has been recast and stars Robert Daws and Dawn Steele.

Victor Smiley (Daws) and his wife Joan (Steele) have been married for a long time. But their marriage has reached crisis point and Victor has decided there is only one way to get Joan out of his life... but he's about to get a nasty surprise.

As young detective Roy Grace starts to investigate his first

homicide case, dark forces intervene and he begins to fear nothing is quite as it seems...

Peter James has sold more than 14 million books from his Roy Grace series and they have been published in 36 languages.

He is one of the most successful crime writers in the world.

KoS has teamed up with The Marlowe Theatre to present a competition with a fantastic prize.

You can win four tickets to the opening night of the show (and the opening night of the tour), interval drinks and a set of Peter James's books signed and personalised just for you. All you have to do is answer this question:

■ In how many languages have Peter James's novels based on detective Roy Grace been published?

a) 360 b) 12 c) 36

To enter, simply text KOS followed by

MURDER and your answer then your first name, surname address and postcode to 80058, eg KOS MURDER C JOHN SMITH 2 THE STREET, TOWN, DV2 2GT.

Texts cost 50p plus your standard network rate. The winner will be selected from all correct entries.

Usual terms and conditions apply; for full details, visit www.kentnews.co.uk.

Please note that if you should enter after the closing deadline of Wednesday, August 20, 2014, your entry will not be valid but you may still be charged. SMS services are provided by BBA Digital Helpline telephone 0844 3572403.

Alternatively, enter by post to The Perfect Murder Competition, Archant KOS Media, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PP, including your name, address, postcode and contact telephone number.

For more information on The Marlowe Theatre and the play itself, visit www.marlowetheatre.com.



FATAL ATTRACTION: Best-selling crime writer Peter James's story *The Perfect Murder* is back on tour, starring Dawn Steele, pictured left

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Bitter taste behind chef's leftovers gourmet menu

Dev Biswal, star of Channel Four's *Superscrumpers*, aims to bring attention to world's shocking waste of food in an unusual way, reports **Maria Chiorando**

THE Ambrette restaurant, which has branches in Margate, Rye and Canterbury, hopes to bring attention to the enormous amount of food we waste in Britain, through three charity dinners.

Chef patron Dev Biswal, who grew up in Calcutta, is the resident chef on the Channel Four TV series *Superscrumpers*, where he shows viewers how to prepare gourmet meals on a budget using cheap ingredients, leftovers and wild plants foraged for free.

The dinners come as a response to government figures that say each year countrywide we discard £10 billion of food.

That works out at a massive £480 per household.

Globally, up to 50 per cent of all food produced in the world is never consumed. In the developing world, wastage is the result of inefficient harvesting, poor storage and inadequate transportation.

But in the West, 'sloppy habits', poor meal-planning and a disconnection from food sources



“Not only is it morally repugnant but it has serious economic and environmental implications”

mean we simply waste it.

Emma Marsh is a spokeswoman for LoveFoodHateWaste.com, a company that aims to reduce food waste by raising awareness.

She said: “Reducing the amount of food and drink wasted is now seen as a key component in developing a sustainable food system and playing a major role in

future global food security.

“Our work at WRAP and Love Food Hate Waste on food waste and food security has been gradually expanding, helping to support broader food policy in the UK and providing the basis for action at the European and international levels.”

Up to 30 per cent of fruit and vegetables grown in the UK are never harvested.

Crops are rejected because of size or appearance or ploughed back because of over-production.

This wastage also has an environmental impact: growing and producing food, distributing it and storing and cooking it uses energy, fuel and water.

In a recent report from the House of Lords EU Select Committee, chairwoman Baroness Scott said: “Food waste in the EU and the UK is clearly a huge issue.

“Not only is it morally repugnant but it has serious economic and environmental implications.

“The fact 90 million tonnes of food is wasted across the EU each year shows the extent of the

problem and explains why we are calling for urgent action.

“Globally, consumers in industrialised nations waste up to 222 million tonnes of food a year, which is equivalent to nearly the entire level of net food production of sub-Saharan Africa.”

Chef Biswal plans to showcase his leftovers with a gourmet six-course tasting menu, using ingredients commonly discarded by restaurants, supermarkets, butchers, fishmongers and domestic kitchens; this includes chicken skin, cauliflower stalks, fruit peelings and fish heads.

From these foods, he will conjure such dishes as mouldy cheese soup, crispy fried-chicken skins marinated in mango, ginger and red chilli, savoury panna cotta flavoured with cauliflower stalks and fish-head stew.

“The goal is to create consciousness about food waste and donate proceeds raised from the Waste Away dinners to help alleviate the dreadful humanitarian situation in South Sudan,” he said.

Kentish Hare's revamp brings a touch of class and great food

The Kentish Hare

Location: Bidborough

By Maria Chiorando

THE newly-revamped Kentish Hare in Bidborough, near Tunbridge Wells, opened its doors in May after having a makeover by celebrity-chef duo the Tanner brothers.

And this is no meaningless celebrity endorsement – the new owners have injected a real element of class.

It has been transformed in a gastro pub, with a menu that is beautifully conceived, if rather meat-centric, and dishes that are perfectly crafted.

The staff are highly accommodat-ing – after requesting a menu change,

I was informed that anyone with dietary requirements, such as veganism, was welcome to phone ahead and the chef would prepare a menu for them.

The menu is full of classics, and flavour balance seems to be the focus here, with sweet maple-glazed pears coupled with blue-cheese sauce and seared scallops cooked alongside a punchy chorizo.

Indigenous food is used, too... strawberries and Kentish blue cheese, for example.

When the ingredients have been locally sourced, and a menu so expertly compiled, the results are likely

to be superlative – and indeed they were.

We had olives while deciding on our order: they were punchy, with a touch of chilli and, interestingly, a couple of sprigs of rosemary. As olives go, they were excellent.

I chose the pea risotto, slightly modified to remove any dairy, which the kitchen did expertly and without question.

It was one of the best risotti I have ever eaten – and I've eaten a lot.

There was no hint of chalkiness in the rice and it was cooked to a creamy deliciousness.

There were layers of fresh flavours that complemented each other... the

peas, lemon, delicate parsley and the rice itself, as well as an extremely tasty olive oil.

It was practically perfect.

The other dish, a chateaubriand, was also excellent.

It was cooked exactly as requested (medium rare) and was a fantastic piece of meat, coming with a variety of sauce options.

We tried the mushroom brandy cream, which was highly recommended, and the peppercorn, which was sadly lacking in peppercorns.

There was a good selection of side dishes. The green beans sautéed in shallots and garlic were sublime, and the house salad was also excellent.

The triple-cooked chips were good. My personal preference would be for a thinner chip – these were very chunky, so some of the benefits of triple-frying them were, for me, lost.

This is my own esoteric taste, though, and they were very good chips.

We had an espresso to finish. The coffee had a good layer of crema and a kick of bitterness.

The bill was just shy of £100, which felt a fair price for superlative food expertly cooked.

There is also a daily set menu.

■ The Kentish Hare
95 Bidborough Ridge
Bidborough TN3 0XB
(Telephone 01892 525709)





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Stage set for beaming smiles this summer as youngsters are given chance to shine

OUR summer workshops are open to non-Stagecoach students. You don't need any previous experience – a smile will do just fine.

Enjoy a fun-packed week in the summer holidays complete with dance, singing and drama.

Each day students will work towards a performance on the

Saturday in front of their family and friends.

Here's the chance to learn from West End performers and a great opportunity to gain new skills while making some new friends.

■ **When I Grow Up. Tuesday to Saturday, August 26-30:** For seven- to 16-year-olds based on

Matilda. Cost £160 (£90 siblings).

Young Performers. Tuesday to Saturday, August 26-30: For four- to seven-year-olds based on Annie. Cost £100 (£80 siblings)

Both workshops will be held at our usual venue, North School, Essella Road, Ashford TN24 8AL.

Set your sights on enjoying a whole new type of sporting activity

DARTFORD Clay Shooting Club's extensive ground has an in-house catering service serving warm and cold food and beverages.

The large clubhouse benefits from a snooker table and large-screen TV for customers to relax in before and after their shooting experience.

Recently renovated, the club's Have A Go lesson station is bespoke to the rest of the shooting ground and is under cover and great in all weathers – plus it's situated only 10

metres from the clubhouse. Being totally enclosed, the station is ideal if the shooter or group of shooters require total privacy.

There are also several professional coaches on site to offer tuition during the Have A Go lessons.

As one of only a few CPSA Premier Plus clay-shooting venues in the UK, Dartford Clay Shooting Club is dedicated to providing top-quality clay-pigeon sports.

Clay-pigeon-shooting is an ideal

sport that can be enjoyed by all ages. Families and groups are most welcome. If you have never tried clay-pigeon-shooting before, then this is the ideal venue for your first experience of a fantastic sport.

For the experienced shooter, the club offers a range of shooting disciplines, including skeet (English and NSSA), Olympic trap, compak, DTL and sporting.

The clubhouse is open to all and offers a warm welcome where staff

are always available to assist and advise you.

Enjoy a cooked breakfast at the start of your day, or take some time out to enjoy a hearty lunch from the café; have a game of pool or darts or sit back and relax watching the large-screen TV.

See www.dartfordclayshootingclub.com, which should cover any questions. For further information, please phone 01322 311001 or email dartfordcsc@aol.com.



New showroom offers premier products with internet help in designing your dream kitchen

ALARIS, the home of luxury kitchens, has just opened a stunning new showroom in Dartford.

The kitchens are by Pronorm and Mereway, providers of the best in German and British kitchens.

The new showroom provides an opportunity to see the latest ideas in kitchen design, combining modern and traditional styles to suit all tastes.

A free design service is provided by expert designers, with the installation service provided by a highly-skilled team of craftsmen.

For those struggling to make the trip to this superb centre, an internet-based design service is also available at www.arena-kitchens.co.uk.

There you can view the full range of kitchens available and if you

complete the online form your design and quotation will be forwarded by email – a unique service that will save you even more money.

Visit the showroom at 3 Schooner Park, Schooner Court, Crossways Business Park, Dartford DA2 6NW, or phone 01322 275511 for a designer to make a home visit.

The opening sale is now on.

This is one rural retreat worth tracking down

SITUATED four miles outside Faversham in the small village of Hernhill, The Red Lion is a 14th-century inn with a wonderful rustic interior of flagstones and beams.

To the side is a large garden with a children's play area and a car park.

Upstairs is the beautiful beamed function room available for functions and meetings, along with a new Champagne bar for those extra-special events and occasions.

The Champagne bar and restaurant are the perfect place to host your special occasions and events – complete with fantastic service and a choice of great food for any occasion.

The warm, cosy atmosphere at The Red Lion will make you want to stay all day... and all night.

There is a selection of cask ales, keg beers and ciders to suit all, plus good wines and soft drinks.

Food is served every lunchtime and

evening except Christmas Day.

The food is home-cooked, tasty and plentiful and you can choose from the main menu or the specials.

Lunchtime snacks are available for those wanting a smaller meal every day, except on Sunday, when roasts of pork, beef and lamb are on the menu.

The Red Lion also offers a selection of traditional, locally sourced food alongside the frequently-changing seasonal specials.



Interest-free loans are great opportunity to those businesses looking to expand



THERE'S great news for Ashford-based businesses – they are now eligible to apply for zero per cent interest-free loans, up to £2.5 million, via the Expansion East Kent loan scheme.

The scheme is designed for businesses seeking growth, creating or safeguarding jobs within the borough. Kent Invicta Chamber can provide free application support to those looking to access the funds.

Under the scheme, the Small

Business Boost economic-growth fund is designed to support job-creation for small businesses.

Both schemes are funded through the Government's Regional Growth Fund and are managed by Kent County Council in partnership with public- and private-sector partners.

This scheme offers zero per cent interest loans between £2,000 and £50,000 to help start-ups and small businesses that are seeking to develop new or expand existing products or

services, where this will lead to sustained employment.

To find out more or to apply, book a call back from an adviser by visiting www.supportek.co.uk or emailing help@supportek.co.uk

Also working in partnership with Ashford Borough Council, Kent Invicta Chamber offers free advice and support to those looking to set up a new business. Additionally, existing business can access free impartial advice and guidance.

If you're thinking of expanding into mainland Europe or further afield, again we can help.

For further information, you can email businesssupport@kentinvictachamber.co.uk or visit www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk.

Kent Invicta Chamber provides a range of products and services to help support businesses within the borough, irrespective of size or sector. To find out more, visit www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk.



Wine and dine in award-winning garden of The Flying Dutchman

THE Flying Dutchman is in the high street by Queenborough harbour, on the Isle of Sheppey, and is currently undergoing a facelift.

The pub is rightly proud of its garden, having just won the Queenborough in Bloom award.

The Flying Dutchman's carvery is

open seven days a week, noon until 3pm and 6pm-9pm: Mondays £3.95, Tuesday to Saturday £4.95 and Sundays £6.95. There is a selection of three meats and fresh vegetables.

The pub's menu also includes steaks up to 32oz, jumbo cod and many other favourites – keep an eye

out for midweek specials and two-for-one deals.

It also caters for functions and large parties. Check out Facebook or phone for details.

■ The Flying Dutchman
9 High Street, Queenborough
ME11 5AA (phone 01795 667189)

HUBBARD International is a tuition and performance organisation whose senior tutor is the international soprano Christine Hubbard.

Her tuition skills cover the full range of vocal coaching, including remedial work and a voice clinic with medical back-up, and she coaches at all levels: from beginners, grade examinations and diploma level to professional performers.

She is skilled with teaching all ages and genres of singing.

Recently she has received referrals from doctors and psychiatrists as she is achieving remarkable results with

International soprano possesses all the right skills to finally let your voice be heard

many medical conditions.

In addition to being an excellent vocal coach, Christine is very good at boosting confidence and presentation skills, which includes addressing elocution difficulties, particularly within the workplace, and preparation for public speaking. Visit hubbardinternational.net.

Unsolicited testimonial...

"AFTER a year of vocal tuition with Christine, not only have I developed a powerful singing voice (the like of which I never would have believed myself capable) but I have a new-found confidence and improved body language, which has transformed my personal and professional life.

"I highly recommend Hubbard International for tailoring lessons to my individual needs, providing a friendly but professional one-to-one learning environment, offering many invaluable public-performance opportunities, and for supporting me in my achievement of a first-class degree in music."



Fancy the chance to sample fine wine in beautiful surroundings? Then read this!

BOOK a tour at Meopham Valley Vineyards and you will not only see the grapes in growth and have the grape-growing process explained by the proprietor but you can also taste six of the vineyards' award-winning wines.

Three of the wines are sparkling and can be bought from the vineyard

shop after the tour, while of the still wines the 2013 rosé can be purchased in 35 Waitrose stores around the UK.

Meopham Valley Vineyards was the proud winner of the bronze award in the 2014 Decanter World Wide Wine Awards for its Brut Rosé – the 2011 vintage.

If you would like to book for one of their prestigious tours, please visit www.meophamvalleyvineyard.co.uk or phone 01474 812727.

■ Meopham Valley Vineyards
Norway House, Wrotham Road,
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(email info@meophamvalleyvineyard.co.uk)

New management promises Hart-felt welcome as public house ticks all the right boxes, whatever you're seeking

FAMILY-FRIENDLY, recently refurbished and under new management, The White Hart welcomes you with a bustling bar, smart informal restaurant, a gourmet menu and regular entertainment.

We have a large function room available for any events and a heated terrace for the cold winter months.

There is also a small play area for the children to let off steam.

With plenty of parking and a large garden, we offer home-cooked meals, daily specials and lots of traditional pub fare – there's sure to be something for everyone.

With a fire roaring in the winter, be sure to get in good and early to get the best seat, particularly when we have our superb entertainment nights, normally once a month.

■ Saturday, August 23:
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■ Tuesday, September 16:
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Please bring this article with you and receive a free coffee and a free starter or dessert with your main meal.

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INCLUDED: 3 Free drinks every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & mixers ● Full entertainment programme ● 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available ● 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners

Quote US11-KOS

Mamma Mia & Super 70s Carry on New Year Party

£229^{PP} 3 nights, Friday 9 January, 2015

£10^{PP}
DEPOSIT

Warner
Bembridge Hotel
Isle of Wight

FREE DRINKS
6pm to Midnight
every night

**Rock Stewart
& Ultimate
Elton**

**MAMMA
MIA THE
MOVIE**

**ABBA
Tribute
Band**

Come Dancing Party



If you're a dance fan who enjoys ballroom & latin dancing, you'll love our popular Come Dancing Party, running alongside the Carry on New Year Party - add dance tuition, a Gala Ball, a huge dance floor with reserved table & seating and much more for just £50^{PP} extra.

Our private party extends the New Year festivities and takes us on a trip down memory lane at our favourite Warner hotel. Enjoy a gala New Year's Eve party with countdown to midnight and great entertainment.

INCLUDED: Free Bar from 6pm to midnight every night for house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & mixers ● Entertainment ● 3 dinners & 3



Quote BE1-KOS

breakfasts ● 3 nights en-suite CHALET - hotel upgrades available with rooms in main building from £259^{PP} ● Car ferry crossing worth £45

SUPER 70s CHRISTMAS PARTY

£129^{PP} 3 nights half board plus Friday 21 November, 2014

£10^{PP}
DEPOSIT

**Alvin
Stardust**

**Abba Tribute
Free Drinks**

**Rod Stewart Tribute
Frankie Valli Tribute**



Quote MS11-KOS

Join us for a cool weekend of swinging 70s sounds at Pontins seaside resort near Lowestoft, Suffolk. Enjoy an entertainment packed weekend with leather-clad 70s rocker Alvin Stardust performing live and our Abba-themed Christmas Party. You'll also enjoy 3 free drinks per person per night.

INCLUDED: 3 Free drinks every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & mixers ● Full entertainment programme ● 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available ● 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners

Swinging Sixties Fab Feb Party

£209^{PP} 3 nights, Friday 6 February, 2015

£10^{PP}
DEPOSIT

Warner
Corton
Suffolk Coast

FREE DRINKS
6pm to Midnight
every night

**The
Fortunes**

**Union
Gap**

**Frankie Valli
& Friends
tribute**



Quote CW2-KOS

Great Entertainment, Free Drinks, good food and a super location by the sea near Lowestoft in Suffolk make Warner's Corton Coastal Holiday Village a great party venue.

INCLUDED: Free Bar from 6pm to midnight every evening for house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & mixers ● Entertainment ● 3 dinners & 3 breakfasts ● 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available

SPRING BACK TO THE 60s PARTY

£129^{PP} 3 nights half board plus Friday 13 March, 2015

£10^{PP}
DEPOSIT

**The Tremeloes
The Beatles Experience**

**Buddy Holly Tribute
Free Drinks**

**Swinging Blue Jeans
Dave Grant of Paper Lace**



Quote US3-KOS

Join us for a party weekend to remember as we Spring Back to the 60s with a packed entertainment programme of original sounds and top tributes. Add to this the great location of Pontins Pakefield, by the sea near Lowestoft, Suffolk, and 3 Free Drinks per person per night and you've got the perfect recipe for a great party weekend.

INCLUDED: 3 Free drinks every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & mixers ● Full entertainment programme ● 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available ● 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners

Carry On New Year Party - Bosworth Hall Hotel, Leics



£109^{PP}

2 nights half board plus ● Friday 23 January, 2015

Extend your New Year celebrations at Bosworth Hall Hotel, in the village of Market Bosworth near Leicester. Our popular private party weekends have become a must-do annual event with guests returning year after year. Set in 11 acres of landscaped gardens, with an indoor pool and gym available for guests' use.

INCLUDED: 2 drinks for the price of 1 from 7pm to 11pm both evenings for house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & mixers ● 2 dinners and 2 breakfasts ● Full programme of live entertainment ● 2 nights sharing an en-suite bedroom with TV & tea/coffee tray

**BUY 1 GET
1 FREE
DRINKS
7pm to 11pm**

**Entertainment
+ A New
Year Party**

**£10^{PP}
Deposit**

**Over 40s
only**

Quote BO1-KOS

Worthing Winter Warmer Party - Chatsworth Hotel



£99^{PP}

2 nights half board plus ● 23 & 30 Jan & 6 Feb, 2015

Join us in Worthing for a Winter Warmer Party and enjoy £1 drinks and live entertainment every night. The Chatsworth is one of the finest hotels on the south coast, just a stone's throw from the sea and a short stroll to the town centre. All bedrooms are en-suite and a lift services all floors.

INCLUDED: £1 drinks from 7pm to 10pm both evenings - pint of house beer or small glass of wine ● 2 dinners and 2 breakfasts ● Live nightly entertainment ● 2 nights sharing an en-suite bedroom with TV & free wifi

**£1 Drinks
7pm to 10pm
Each Night**

**Live
Entertainment
Each Night**

**£10^{PP}
Deposit**

**Over 40s
only**

Quote WO1-KOS



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The bride's day

Let her shine



THE bride is going to look gorgeous – it doesn't matter what she is wearing, she will be stunning.

That's her prerogative. As a guest, you don't get to upstage her... or look like

something the cat dragged in.

There are some clothes that are simple no-nos when it comes to turning up at someone else's wedding. Nothing outlandish, nothing scruffy, nothing that will make the bride look at you twice. And that goes for the men, too.

All week, we have to dress a certain way to fit in at work, and it's the same when you show up at a wedding.

You need to slot in – look the greatest you have been all year – but don't show yourself up or any of the bridal party.

Here are some tips collected from experts around the world to prevent you from becoming an eyesore for either the other guests or the bride.

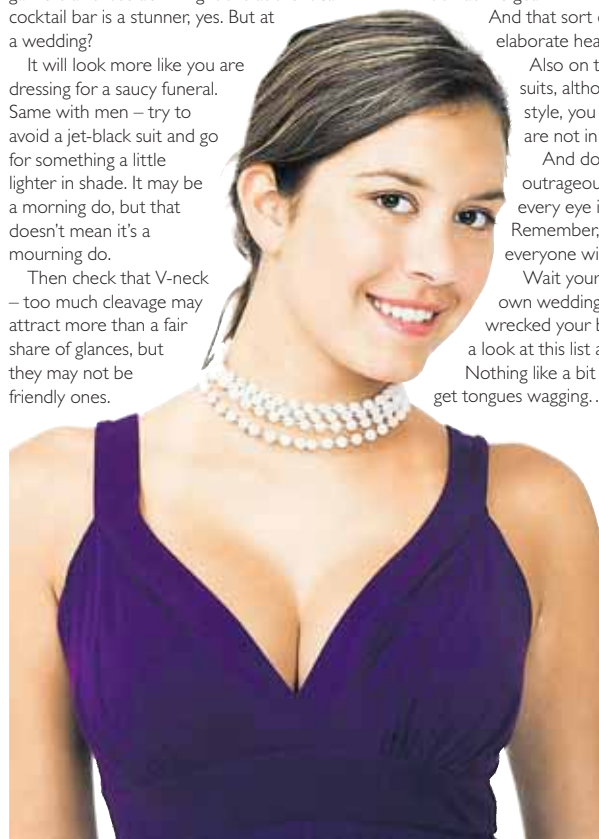
Here are some dos and, perhaps more importantly, some don'ts.

Colours are important, of course, and white is right out because chances are that's what the bride will be wearing. You have to stand out while blending in, and blending in with the bride is a major no.

Same with black. That nifty little black dress that garners all those admiring looks at the local cocktail bar is a stunner, yes. But at a wedding?

It will look more like you are dressing for a saucy funeral. Same with men – try to avoid a jet-black suit and go for something a little lighter in shade. It may be a morning do, but that doesn't mean it's a mourning do.

Then check that V-neck – too much cleavage may attract more than a fair share of glances, but they may not be friendly ones.



Same with the hemline of that dress – legs are nice; ample views of thighs less so.

And so let's take a look at the other end of the scale. Jeans and T-shirts are the ultimate in dress-down. But do you really need to be told this is a wedding?

No matter how casual the event, unless your invitation specifically says dress like a slob, make an effort. Same with the shoes – trainers and flip-flops? Really?

A tuxedo looks smart. Heck, James Bond can really rock the look. But, honestly guys, just the groom gets to sport the ultimate in suave today. A bow-tie won't be so bad, especially if you are already known for sporting one.

Just like the jeans look – picking a style that went out with the ark will just look weird, unless it actually says it's a requirement on the invitation. Tie dye, flares or an Afghan will just look daft.

Here in the UK, school-leavers love their prom dresses.

This import from the US is all the rage, but it is not designed to be worn at a wedding. Glamorous parties are the place for these – perhaps you can change in to it later in the evening to boogie the night away.

And, finally, those accessories. Most of the time they are just fine, but do you need telling not to wear a tiara during the ceremony?

If the bride wants to, that's great. But you are a mere humble guest and have no right to wear just look-at-me gear.

And that sort of goes for pretty much any elaborate headwear.

Also on the do-not list are trouser-suits, although, depending on the style, you could get away with it. You are not in the office, remember.

And don't put on anything outrageously garish that will draw every eye in the wedding pictures. Remember, the bride is the one everyone will be looking at.

Wait your turn or remember your own wedding day. Mind you, if a pal wrecked your big day, you can always take a look at this list and reverse the advice.

Nothing like a bit of wedding-day revenge to get tongues wagging...



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Present ideas

Gifts of love



inding that perfect gift, or even looking for something as different as table decorations, can be tough at weddings.

One company-owner has offered some advice to both guests and wedding-planners

for some off-the-wall ideas.

Annabel James said: "I've got some fab jewellery for brides and bridesmaids."

Top of her list is a Champagne cork-holder at £38.95.

Everyone likes to keep the cork from a particularly special occasion and this silver-plated cork-holder is also presented in a gorgeous gift box.

This is a new product – so new it has only just become available.

Annabel said: "This is a great wedding keepsake to preserve the cork of the first bottle of fizz from a wedding. It can be engraved with the date of the wedding, the couple's initials... in fact anything. This is one of my favourites of all time."

Then there is a mini bouquet vase to show flowers; it costs £9.95.

Annabel said: "This hand-made mini bouquet vase is perfect for miniature, low displays of flowers. The vases look lovely displayed along a long table so are perfect for wedding receptions and, of course, come gift-boxed."

Or how about a leather-handled wine-cooler with six silver-plated flutes for a price of £215?

She said: "This is exquisite, being hand-crafted, and even the flutes are silver-plated. They are designed without feet so they are always perfectly chilled. Just add ice and a bottle of Champagne. Great for wedding receptions and a wonderful wedding present."

But if that is slightly too rich, there are polka Champagne flutes at £29.95.

"This set of Champagne flutes is in four different vintage-inspired pastel colours," she said.

And, finally, more silver plating for a Champagne bath at £164.95.

Annabel said: "It comes with tan leather handles and holds up to three bottles – the perfect way to keep your wine or Champagne chilled. It is great for the wedding reception."

For more information, visit annabeljames.co.uk.



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Bespoke design

The perfect dress

GETTING the right wedding dress could possibly be the most important decision a bride will make before the big day.

And chances are she will have plenty of concrete ideas in her head about how it should look and will inevitably be disappointed with those off the hook.

That's where Kent designer Judy Mott steps in – she and her assistant can design and produce a dress to the exacting demands of the fussiest of brides.

Whatever crazy, or abstract, design a would-be bride can conjure up, Judy can produce it. She has a list of assurances for each wedding party.

These include the promise that all dresses are individually made in Tunbridge Wells using only the finest silks and French lace.

All bespoke dresses will have one or more toile fittings before the dress is cut in silk to ensure a perfect fit.

If you are short or tall, petite or curvaceous, a dress made individually for you will always make the absolute most of your figure.

Dresses can be made in any colour silk – the range of which is extensive.

Judy says she provides a relaxed and friendly atmosphere and assures brides her attention to detail is meticulous.

She said: "It is a wonderful experience to have your wedding dress made individually for you and to see it evolve through the toile process and fitting in silk."

"The price quoted at the order stage is the price you pay. All fittings are inclusive, so there will be no hidden alteration costs."

Judy designs her own dresses, too, and they can be bought off the peg from £500, while her Couture wedding dresses start from £1,800, but most pay about £2,000.

She told us: "I have always sewn – it is something I have always wanted to do – and now I have the chance to completely fill my day doing what I love the most and in turn help make dreams come true for a lot of people."

The designer can take care of the bride, bridesmaid and bride's mother but tends to steer clear of men's clothes.

"Because I specialise and give a great service,

people come to me because they have been recommended," said Judy.

"I have been doing this for 24 years and have steadily built a reputation I can be proud of."

"Over a year, we make between 50 and 60 dresses for bridal parties – we can do anything people ask us to do. We have had quite a few weddings where we have been asked to make the bride's dress, the bridesmaids' and the bride's mother's."

"Most wedding dresses are about £2,000 and, when compared with what you can pay for one off the peg, I think I provide much better value for money as the bride ends up with something bespoke."

"Most dresses come in a standard size and are then altered to fit. Sometimes, when a bride comes for a first fit and then goes on a diet before the big day, their shape can change but not dramatically."

"Generally, I have factored this in to the design and can work fitting dates in around that and do the final fitting as close to the wedding day as possible."

For more information, visit www.judymott.com or phone 01892 510 107.



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Soaring away

Taking part

GREAT news, your friend is getting married – better news is that it's later this year, or, hopefully even better, next year.

Because the longer they leave it, the better chance you have of saving up the small fortune to pay for all the good times your friend's nuptials will cost you – the guest.

You don't want to let them down, but these days brides and grooms tend to go over the top.

In the good old days, it was just a night out down the pub, on to a nice restaurant and perhaps a nightclub.

These days, you can expect multiple nights out with specially laid-on entertainment or classes in cocktail-making and even a hotel for the night as you tend a sore head... because the restaurant, pub and club are still on that list.

And it doesn't happen once. How about hot-air ballooning or a groom having a day out at the horses or cars – it will have your wallet creaking.

Plus, there is no way you can say no, is there?

American Express totalled up the average cost of some fun before the happy couple get to actually walk down the aisle. Oh, and don't forget, that aisle may be in some far-off land, too.

Anyway, back to the cost of all that 'prior' fun. Costs have gone up a staggering 75 per cent over just two years ago and that is basically down to brides and grooms wanting to be ever more extravagant. Expect the build-up to whack the wallet to the tune of about £500, according to AmEx.

That takes in transportation, hotels, clothing and personal grooming. Got that? Not even the gift is included in that sum. The credit-card company quizzed some 1,500 people and found marrying couples are now spending an average of £200 per guest, so you don't even get your investment back.

But they are dear friends, right? Chances are they are very dear.

Dan Rabkin, American Express's senior vice-president of consumer lending, said: "Guests may feel obligated to give an appropriate gift for a wedding, even if it means they have to carry a balance on their credit card for a while."



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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Remembering a month of terror

IN September 1944, Dover suffered its worst bombardment from German shelling, endured during four years of long-range attacks.

Hitler's gunners on the French coast were using up their shells before the guns were captured by advancing Canadian troops.

In a month more than 300 were fired at Dover, killing 41 civilians and destroying hundreds of homes.

Many soldiers, including Americans, and sailors based in and around the town were also killed.

On Sunday, September 14, at 10.45am a community service is to be held at the church of Saint Mary-the-Virgin in Dover, commemorating that terrible month, remembering those who died, and giving thanks that the ancient church escaped serious damage – although the surrounding area was left in ruins.

The church is hoping that "people still alive who endured those terrible September days will join us at this special service.

"Perhaps those whose family members were killed by shelling would like to join us.

"We will also be giving thanks to the brave Canadian soldiers who risked death in capturing and eliminating the guns that, in four years, fired more than 2,200 shells into the town of Dover, resulting in around 200 civilian deaths."

Terry Sutton,
Dover

TV highlights the issue of dogs

I WONDER how many people watched 'Dangerous Dog Owners and Proud' on Channel 5.

No doubt it frightened many – and so it should.

I do feel dog-welfare societies should be pressing government for compulsory neutering.

Added to this, they must press to ban puppy farms and monitor all registered breeding establishments.

If they don't, then the breeding of dangerous dogs will continue and so will the thousands of healthy and loving dogs being euthanized because good homes cannot be found.

Pam Ward, by email

Party failings are turning our heads

CAMPAIGNING for Ukip in the recent elections, we found many

LETTER OF THE WEEK



It's not all about the money, County Hall

WHAT a grubby, tawdry place Kent is becoming, with those based at County Hall seeming to set the worst tone of all.

With so many people in this county and elsewhere showing such dignity and respect as those who gave their all in the First World War were remembered, we have a spokesman from Kent County Council all too inevitably reducing the whole issue to money (last week's KoS).

With Folkestone playing such an important role in the national commemorations, it was unfortunate that there was some debate over the value of the town's Memorial Arch.

It was even more unfortunate that a county council spokesman chose to respond in the manner that he or she did.

"The visitor economy in Kent is worth £64 million per annum and it supports around 64,000 jobs," we were informed by the spokesman.

"The Memorial Arch will add to the overall offer for visitors to Folkestone and east Kent," he or she continued.

For goodness sake, just for once stop talking about money and "the overall offer", as well as those always spurious and unquantifiable figures about the value of tourism.

These last few weeks have been a time of reflection, remembrance and respect. If those from County Hall are unable to behave in the appropriate manner, perhaps they should just say nothing at all.

It's not all about money.

Michael Davies, Broadstairs

people who refused to vote, just saying 'They're all the same' [KoS, July 07, Who will have the 'X' factor in the General Election?].

There were even those who hadn't bothered to register – mostly young people.

This is what the two main parties have reduced this country to: a pseudo democracy where potential voters have been so turned off by lies, failed policies, corruption and their views and wishes being ignored as if they have no value.

Voters have turned their backs on those ignoring them.

No wonder Ukip has made so many gains. They only exist because the other parties care little for this

country and its people, selling our country to foreigners, letting it be run by foreigners and us be overwhelmed by foreigners.

We can only hope the public will wake up and vote for any party other than the main ones who got us into this appalling mess.

It's the Tory and Labour parties that have generated the apathy factor.

Phil Granger, West Malling

Be sure you know price of getaway

AS the summer is well under way and more people are taking breaks in their caravans, TV Licensing is

reminding caravan-owners about the need to be correctly licensed if they are watching live TV from their static caravans, mobile homes or moveable chalets.

Many caravan-owners may be unaware that a separate licence for the caravan is needed if a TV is being used to receive or record programmes in the caravan and at their main home address at the same time.

No licence is needed for a touring caravan so long as a valid TV licence is held for the main home address.

A TV licence can be bought online and costs £145.50 for the year.

There are many ways to pay, including weekly, monthly and quarterly payments.

Anyone who owns a holiday home that is a permanent structure, such as a cottage, flat or bungalow, should be aware that they must be covered by a valid TV licence for their second home.

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Martin Dyan, TV Licensing,
London and the South East

Poignant words need your support

HOPEFULLY you will agree this is perfect timing for my elegy, City of Remembrance, reworked from a poem I wrote in 1983.

It is included in my Kindle ebook Requiem of Remembrance, from which I plan to donate 50 per cent of royalties to the Royal British Legion.

*Lonely city, lonely city,
Lonely city
Full of buildings
Windswept
Burnt, all forlorn.*

*Lonely city
Grieving deep
No one lives, no one passes,
In your streets
Or your pain*

*Lonely city, lonely city,
Missing those
War has claimed
To your loss, lonely city.*

*Lonely city, lonely city,
In your church
All our thoughts
Honour them
From afar.*

Robert Duncan Martin,
Canterbury

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles which tie in with our parent company Archant's overall mission statement.

Archant's mission statement is: "We bring together motivated buyers and sellers through the creation of unique and compelling content and community expertise." This is summed up in the strapline "Inspiring Communities".

The way KoS will create our unique and compelling content is to follow these 10 principles: **Kent on Sunday will:**

- 1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
- 2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
- 3) Be written in clear, concise English.
- 4) Not be overly sensational.
- 5) Have a sense of humour.
- 6) Have an easily understood division between

news, comment and advertising.

- 7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
- 9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
- 10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.



Harvest at Higham

by **Ken Millar**
from **Sittingbourne**

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business

Rural businesses set for growth in the next year

Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

RURAL employment, investment and profitability are all likely to rise sharply in the South East, according to a survey by countryside group the CLA and rural adviser Smiths Gore.

The latest CLA and Smiths Gore Rural Economy Index (REI) shows that investment is set to increase in the sector, with a net balance of 47 per cent of rural firms stating that they will be spending more on their business over the next 12 months.

Optimism in the rural sector is also booming, with a net balance of 47 per cent stating that they have more confidence in the sector as farming continues to do well throughout the country.

The survey is taken to provide investors with an insight into the business environment for the rural economy, using a sample from agricultural and non-agricultural rural firms.

It uses net balances – the proportion of businesses that report a rise against those reporting a fall – to



OPTIMISTIC: Robin Edwards

show the direction and scale of change in key indicators in the sector.

The survey uses eight key indicators, seven of which have shown positive results this year.

Employment in the sector could also rise, with expansion expected by 29 per cent of respondents, while 41 per cent of firms polled were anticipating higher profits over the next

year. That's much higher than the national figure, where only 14 per cent of businesses are expecting a rise in profitability.

Robin Edwards, CLA director for the South East, said: "Investment is vital if the South East rural economy is to continue to grow and recover.

"It is a major boost for the region that the survey shows investment, profitability and employment are all expected to rise in both the farming sector and non-farming businesses."

Dr Jason Beedell, head of research at Smiths Gore, said: "Farming businesses continue to recover from a challenging 2012 and the balance now expect sales and profits to be higher in the next year.

"Just under 40 per cent of the non-agricultural rural businesses reported higher sales over the past six months and 58 per cent expect sales growth next year – fantastic news for the rural economy as a whole."

The report states that the rural sector has been bolstered by a rise in the wider UK economy.

This year's survey has been heralded as the most optimistic since it first started in 2012.

So where's the county's cash?

A STUDY into where Kent's savers keep their money has revealed that 55 per cent invest in a current account, while 50 per cent use ISAs.

It also found that men are two times more likely to invest in stocks and shares than women, with 15 per cent of respondents saying they choose to invest in them.

Bonds and investment funds are least popular, with only 6 per cent saying they choose to invest in them.

Krispy Kreme baker bought

SEVENOAKS bakery BFP Holdings, which supplies companies like Krispy Kreme, has been sold to London-based private equity firm Zimt Holdings.

Nick Harris, managing director of BFP Wholesale, said: "We have found a strong partner that is fully aligned with our goals and has the resources to help us drive the next phase of the company's development."

The management buys Kent Crisps and Kentish Oils

TWO Kent fine-food companies have been snapped up in a management buyout deal.

Kent Crisps and Kentish Oils, which were both under the control of Quex Park Estates, have been bought by Angie Curwen, director at Quex Park Estates.

Curwen was advised in the buyout of the two companies by Reeves, a Kent-based accountant. The buyout was completed after Curwen got backing from Close Brothers, a London merchant bank.

Both of the companies use locally-sourced ingredients to create their products and have won numerous awards for their food. These have included the Guild of Fine Foods 2011 Great Taste Gold Award and being named Kent Artisan Food Producer of the Year in 2012.

The products are sold nationally to companies such as British Airways and P&O.

Curwen said: "I am delighted that we have an opportunity to drive sales of these fantastic products with the support of Quex, from whom we will continue to source most of our raw ingredients."

Scott Miles, Reeves corporate partner, and John Cowie, Reeves corporate finance partner, advised Curwen during the buyout.

The company has recently advised on another management buyouts in Kent.

Cowie said: "We expect to announce a further two transactions very shortly, hot on the heels of these two, reflecting a busy time for the Reeves corporate-finance team and demonstrating a real sense of renewed optimism in mergers and acquisitions, which we foresaw towards the end of 2013.

"We are delighted to have been able to offer our help to Angie, who is truly passionate about Kent Crisps and Kentish Oils."

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By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

Preview

Volvo V60 Polestar

Price: £49,775

Driving appeal: (est) ★★★★★

Image: ★★★★★

Space: ★★★★★

Value: ★★★★★

Running costs: ★★★

How green?: ★★

Best rival:

BMW 335i Touring M Sport

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Swedish marque plans to stalk and worry dominant Germans car-makers with a pressure-tested highly desirable race-bred performance branding

AFTER years in the shadow of the mighty German premium brands, Volvo fancies its chances of challenging the established order.

Now owned by Chinese car giant Geely, there is the cash for research and development, so the Swedish marque has begun making headway with its powerful yet frugal DRIVe diesel engines.

However, as its German rivals – BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi – have shown, it's not all about pandering to economy and tax efficiency; you do need some performance image and snobbery about the badge.

So Volvo is now starting to market the connection with Polestar Racing – its factory racing team – by developing the new £49,775 V60 Polestar.

Volvo calls it a true driver's car for all-year, all roads and all weathers – in short, a driver's car for real life.

By choosing an estate body, the brand is also calling on a heritage of past, potent and practical racing estates wearing the Volvo badge.

With typical brand thoroughness, the car's driving characteristics have been honed by thousands of development miles on twisty mountain roads, motorways and test tracks at Europe's most extreme temperature zones.

That it is now said to drive differently to a standard V60 is obvious – though the original car is no dog – and the Polestar also has its own distinctive nose and cosmetic details, emphasising the standard V60's racy 'estate cum coupe' lines

Volvo sets course with new Polestar

Other view...

the Petrolhead

I'm getting excited. Volvo has worked itself up to be the driver's choice before but never quite made it. This looks promising.

She says

I'm a bit of a Volvo convert. I used to think the brand was all about big, boring gas-guzzling estates... but not any more.

the Eco-warrior

Volvo has become an impressive eco brand, so it's a shame it feels the need to pander to a 'turbo nutter' minority.

even more, while also boosting aerodynamics.

Chassis upgrades mean 80 per cent stiffer springs than the standard V60 line-up's sporting star, the R-Design. It also has bespoke 20-inch Polestar alloys, plus beefier six-piston Brembo calipers for better braking.

Power comes from a six-cylinder turbocharged T6 engine uprated to 350bhp and delivering the required throaty sound of a performance car via a 2.5-inch stainless-steel exhaust system.

This power is then applied via a six-speed automatic gearbox to a Polestar-developed all-wheel-drive system, allowing 0-62mph in just five seconds, top speed being electronically limited to 155mph.

Even the interior has a distinctive Polestar look, with bespoke steering wheel and seats.

But gentler Volvo fans should not fret; while the Swedes have been busy on the Polestar, they have also developed a green V60 flagship for the other extreme of the range though still with a touch of devilment about it: the sporty-looking D6 AWD

R-Design Lux Nav (£51,675 excluding £5,000 Plug-In Car Grant).

Fact is, that whatever the eco movement might fear – see our 'Eco warrior' comment elsewhere this page – the Polestar range will remain a small-volume sub-brand to bring glamour and mystique to Volvo while it quietly goes about its main business of squeezing maximum economy versus power from its powertrains – a formula paying dividends in the company-car sector.

And while the V60 Polestar is grabbing the attention for now, the real interest will come from watching how the Swedish marque applies the label elsewhere in a range of gathering strength.

The low-slung and racy V40 is the big star at the moment, with its balance of style, practicality and image in a largely ordinary-looking premium compact-hatch sector.

But the headline news is that, after some 12 years on the front line – a staggering amount of time in this era of faster model turnover – the venerable XC90 SUV is about to be replaced.

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RACY BUT NOT SO PACY: With low-slung coupé lines, the Kia Rio looks the part, but buyers really need to ask if they want economy or a bit more speed

Kia's supermini does have that Latin edge to it now

IT'S fair to say Kia's first-two-generation Rio models had little of the Latino swagger suggested by the name.

However, the latest model – now firmly established as the Korean brand's supermini – has far more style and substance about it.

Where its two predecessors might have relied on value for money and Kia's as yet unchallenged seven-year/100,000-mile warranty, this is a Rio you can buy simply because you like the look of it.

The low-slung coupé lines deliver a raciness rare in superminis; a generation ago, young drivers might have bought a car like this for its style and enhanced the looks with go-faster stripes, extra lights and alloys – to distract from a dishwater-dull engine under the bonnet.

Nowadays, those same lads would struggle to afford a year's insurance, let alone a decent car – perhaps we should be grateful for small mercies.

The Rio's wide and racy stance doesn't flatter to deceive, either; build and cabin quality is up there with European rivals in most cases.

Only out on the road does the Rio occasionally show it has yet to match the dynamic sophistication of supermini-sector leaders like the Ford Fiesta, VW Polo and Vauxhall Corsa.

There's nothing wrong with the balance of ride and handling manners – the cornering stance is nice and flat with plenty of grip – but the Rio steering doesn't feel as taut as the chassis deserves.

On the other hand, if already drawn to the style, price and warranty, choosing between a three- and five-door model, and the

The third-generation Rio deals in style and quality as well as Kia value and the brand's unique seven-year/100,000-mile warranty, as **Steve Loader** discovered



right engine for your Rio, might be the only issues left on your mind.

We've previously tested the 74bhp 1.1-litre diesel (from £11,995) and been impressed by its 74.3mpg on the official combined cycle and exemption from road tax due to CO₂ emissions of just 99g/km.

This is helped by Kia's Intelligent Stop & Go (ISG) system for best economy during city driving or motorway hold-ups – part of the fuel/emissions-saving 'Ecodynamics' system on all Rio diesels.

However, choosing a three-cylinder format for a diesel was always going to challenge refinement, though the little 74bhp unit settles well for steady cruising, helped by a six-speed gearbox.

It's never zesty, though, so users must ask whether they really do want this version's out and out

economy or a bit more welly whether driving in or out of town.

There are petrol options, of course, including an 84bhp 1.25-litre unit, but that's really there to catch the eye with a £10,095 opening price for the Rio line-up, although it will out-accelerate the 1.1 diesel's modest 0-60mph in 14.9 seconds.

But the 89bhp 1.4-litre diesel tested here is probably the best Rio all-rounder; prices for this start at £14,795 – a bit of a premium – but it offers a combined 70.6mpg and road tax of just £20 a year, exempted in year one. An official urban figure of 62.8mpg looks parsimonious, too.

Living with the car is easy as Kia's designers inserted a 70mm stretch to the wheelbase versus the previous Rio, while the base of the steeply-raked screen sits a huge 156mm further forward than before.

Kia Rio 3 1.4 CRDI (89bhp) 5-DR

Price:	£15,295
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
Reliability:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Road tax:	£20 (zero year one)
Best rival:	Ford Fiesta

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So adults get great legroom front and back – even if the enlarged boot is still only average for the class – while the interior is sensibly organised with decent stowage space.

As ever with Kia, specifications are generous, so the test car's level '3' spec includes auto air-con, alloys, electric folding/heated/adjusting door-mirrors, leather-trimmed wheel and gearknob, electric windows all round, Bluetooth/USB/aux connectivity and heated front seats.



Quantum i20 leap

AS ever with the Koreans, Hyundai's next-generation i20 supermini promises to be a quantum leap from its predecessor despite arriving just five years or so later.

The newcomer makes its world debut at the Paris Motor Show in October, but sneak previews show it is a far better-looking prospect this time, perhaps influenced by Hyundai sister marque Kia's design chief Peter Schreyer, who now oversees both brands' styling.



Discovery add two

LAND Rover has confirmed that its new Discovery Sport – arriving next year and slotting in below the existing Discovery – will have seven seats as standard.

Carefully describing the format as '5+2 seating', the rejuvenated British brand has been running Discovery Sport prototypes with a camouflage wrap that appears to be peeling back to give away perhaps the worst-kept secret in the UK motor industry of late.



New reg '64 salvo

PEUGEOT has launched an aggressive 64 New Reg campaign, with deals on all its youngest and most popular models, including the newly-launched 308 family hatch line-up – the current Car of the Year (pictured).

Offers start, though, with the new 108 city car, available from just £89 a month under Peugeot's unique Just Add Fuel (JAF) three-year low-APR personal lease including insurance, road tax, warranty, servicing and roadside assistance.

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The successful applicants will be responsible for assisting teachers in the school, for which previous experience is required:

£12,816 - £13,609 pa - 37½ hours per week,
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Mon-Fri - Term time only, plus 2 weeks*

(INDIVIDUAL LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS)

The successful applicants will be responsible for assisting teachers in the school, no previous experience is required, full training will be provided:

£11,596 - £12,111 pa - 37½ hours per week,
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HOUSEPARENTS – EXTENDED PROVISION

Working as part of the childcare teams, this role involves providing care and support to children and young people mornings, evenings and weekends being a child or young person's Keyworker and some management responsibility.

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To be responsible for the supervision and care of the children and young people at night.

£22,954 - £25,373 pa (including night allowance)
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Due to the nature of the personal care being provided, Section 7 (2) (a) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 applies.

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Due to the nature of the personal care being provided, Section 7 (2) (a) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 applies.

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As part of the childcare team, these roles involve providing care and support to the children and young people in childcare teams mornings, evenings and weekends. These roles are aimed at candidates with some experience of Care work.

£14,013 - £14,880 plus 10% pa - 41 hours per week, (including weekends) – Term time only, plus 2 weeks *

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As part of the childcare teams, these roles involve providing care and support to the children and young people mornings, evenings and weekends. No experience required, full training will be given.

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email k.mcgowan@thamesview.kent.sch.uk for further information.

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Interviews – w/c 8th September 2014

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THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2010

The following applications have been submitted for consideration by the Council:

Y14/0821/SH† - 13 North Road Hythe Kent CT21 5DS - Pollard to a height of 6 metres of a Lime tree subject of Tree Preservation Order No 7 of 1990.

Y14/0816/SH - Old School House Lister Way Sandgate Folkestone Kent - Listed Building Consent to replace cast iron guttering and downpipes.

Y14/0861/SH - Radar Station Dungeness Road Dungeness Kent - Erection of a dwelling and formation of a replacement access track, following demolition of existing building.

Y14/0780/SH - 27 High Street New Romney Kent TN28 8BN - Change of use from retail (Class A1) to hot food takeaway (Class A5) together with erection of single storey rear extension.

Y14/0859/SH† - Homepeak House Bartholomew Street Hythe Kent CT21 5BB - Felling of two Ash trees situated within a conservation area.

Y14/0832/SH - Flat 1 29 Grimston Gardens Folkestone Kent CT20 2PX - Installation of replacement uPVC windows.

Y14/0756/SH - 12 The Bayle Folkestone Kent CT20 1SQ - Listed Building Consent for the installation of replacement sash window and removal of security bars to bathroom window at rear ground floor.

Any representations should be made in writing to the Head of Planning, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY or emailed to planning@shepway.gov.uk. Comments should be made in writing within 21 days from the date of publication. It should be noted that any representations received will be made available for public inspection.

Some applications can be viewed at other locations in addition to the Civic Centre, Folkestone. The applications are marked as follows:

- The One Stop Shop, Magpies, Church Approach, New Romney

† - Hythe Town Council Offices, Stade Street, Hythe

Applications can be viewed and comments made online at <http://searchplanapps.shepway.gov.uk/online-applications/>.

The applications marked (*) do not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated.

C Lewis, Head of Planning
Shepway District Council

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For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Emily Fraser, HR Assistant

Telephone: 01304 245951

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Shakey all fired up for trio of clashes at Oulton Park

ANY thoughts Sittingbourne rider Shane 'Shakey' Byrne might have entertained about a comfortable cruise to the British Superbike Championship were shattered at Thruxton at the weekend when he was twice beaten into second place by arch rival Josh Brookes.

He heads into the triple-header at Oulton Park this weekend knowing he needs a healthy haul of podium points.

Byrne missed out on the two victories to Brookes at Thruxton and admits that it was a blow to have finished second in both races.

Now he is ready to attack the Oulton Park weekend, knowing that with three races at the Cheshire track there is a potential 15 podium points for the taking.

Byrne also believes, though, that there will be a pack of riders bidding to stop him in his tracks, something he won't want to settle for after losing out by just 0.118 second to Brookes at Oulton Park back in May.

The Sittingbourne man said: "Oulton Park, hopefully, will be another good round for us – we have won there earlier in the season and I want to be winning again this weekend.

"We had two second places at Thruxton, but because I want to be winning and we have been recently, that finishing second seemed so difficult, but that is testament to what we have done so far.

"I want to get to Oulton Park and try to get back winning again as we have three races to do it – that is a big points haul for the championship and we need to nick them.

"For sure, I think there will be some other riders up there this weekend, too, and it would be great to get a win or three for the Rapid Solicitors Kawasaki team."

At Thruxton, Brookes, who rides with Milwaukee Yamaha, celebrated his first double win of the season as he held off the challenge of both Byrne and Ryuichi Kiyonari, with just 0.467 second covering the top three in race two.

The Australian shrugged aside his disappointments of missing out on the podium in recent rounds, as he proved he is ready to get his assault on the championship back on track as he bids to close down series leader Byrne.

Brookes fired ahead of Dan Linfoot from the local Quattro Plant Bourne-mouth Kawasaki team in the opener, then settled into a rhythm to increase his lead over series leader Byrne, who had pounded his Rapid Solicitors Kawasaki into second place.

Brookes took the victory by four seconds and said: "Once I was in front I focused on the strengths of my bike and kept pushing as hard



Pictures: ANDY KELLY



British Superbike racer Shane 'Shakey' Byrne admits being beaten into second place twice at Thruxton was 'a blow' to his championship campaign, but the Sittingbourne racer is keener than ever to return to winning ways at this weekend's 'triple-header' in Cheshire



RACER: Byrne shares a moment with his wife Petra at Thruxton, where he was twice beaten into second place by his arch rival Josh Brookes

as I could where I was strong.

"I maintained good lap times and the gap just grew and grew. It was exciting for me to win that race and get some points back on Shakey."

Byrne held off the challenges from Buildbase BMW rider Ryuichi Kiyonari to take second from his Japanese rival, with Linfoot finishing fourth.

Next time out, Byrne was keen to

make amends, forging into an early lead, but the race was red-flagged because of an oil spill.

On the restart Byrne made another flying start ahead of Linfoot, but Brookes was determined, and moved from fourth to second in one fell swoop at the Club Chicane, and then a lap later passed Byrne at Seagrave.

This time Brookes was unable to

break the triple champions but the Australian still claimed his second victory of the day by 0.204 second from Byrne and Kiyonari.

Brookes said: "The second race was so much harder, with Shakey and Dan (Linfoot) in front of me battling and I didn't want to caught up in anything.

"I threw caution to the wind, pass-

ing them and then got a small gap, but that came down to almost nothing. I think this double win proves we are ready to get this fight back on track for the championship."

■ **The next round of the MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship, takes place at Oulton Park in Cheshire this weekend (Friday to Sunday, August 8-10).**



PEMBURY driver Raoul Owens made a fantastic recovery in the latest round of the Formula Renault 2.0 Northern European Cup at the weekend to post a top-12 finish at Assen.

While qualifying for rounds 10 and 11 of the season didn't go to plan, during the races themselves Owens proved he was capable of lapping with podium-challenging pace but was left ruing contact in each encounter, costing him the chance of a healthy haul of points.

Beginning Sunday's race from the middle of the pack in 14th position, one place ahead of Mark Burdett Motorsport team-mate Jake Hughes, Owens made a good getaway, but his hopes of quickly breaking into the top 10 were dashed on the first lap when a rival pitched him off the track.

Recovering at the tail of the field in 24th position, a long way down on the cars ahead, the Kent racer was fired up and mounted a strong recovery.

Even though the Dutch track is renowned for its lack of overtaking opportunities in single-seaters, Owens carved his way through the order and halfway into the race had already climbed into 15th position.

Posting a best lap of one minute and 37.032 seconds (165.24 km/h average), a match for the pace of second-placed finisher Ryan Tveter, the second-year NEC racer continued to make good progress and ended the race inside the top 12 just a couple of seconds shy of Hughes.

"Whenever you qualify in the middle of the grid or nearer the back, it's always going to be difficult in the races," said the Bright Spark Ventures-supported driver.

"I made a decent start, but another driver thought it'd be a good idea to just cut across me and I got launched into the gravel. By the time I'd gone all the way around the outside of the gravel trap, I was dead last by quite a way.

Assen pace not converted into race-day points

“It's got to happen at the next round - qualifying is costing us the chance of some really good finishes”

"I was pretty angry at that point, so I got my head down and had the same pace as the top five. To finish 12th was great from where I recovered - the pace of the car was very good.

"It's really tough to overtake at Assen, so I'm pretty surprised actually at how far up the order I managed to get."

Unfortunately for the Pembury man, however, he wasn't able to score in the first race of the weekend, on Saturday, when he was forced to retire on lap seven. From the eighth row of the grid, he held 16th position over the course of the first lap before the safety car was deployed after an early incident.

Determined to make up ground, Owens moved into the top 15 at the expense of Roy Geerts shortly after the restart and then set his sights on Jules Gounon.

Unbeknown to him, however, the right-rear of his car had been tagged at some point, causing damage to the suspension, which eventually collapsed on lap seven.

"I'm not actually sure what happened," said Owens. "There must have been some

contact from someone as the rear suspension was weakened and at the last corner on lap six the right-hand side just collapsed.

"It wasn't something that was repairable, so it was frustrating not to score as we had the potential to be in the top 10.

"We know we can do it, our race pace has been strong, but we really do need to nail qualifying as we're getting caught up behind people in the races we shouldn't even be near on track.

"It's got to happen at the next round - qualifying is costing us the chance of some really good finishes.

"Getting that right is fundamentally important."

After a four-week break and the chance to relax after a busy month of racing, Owens will return to action for the penultimate event of the NEC season on the weekend of August 30-31 at Most in the Czech Republic.

After 11 rounds of the NEC, Owens is in 13th position with 79 points.



CHALLENGE: Paul Parrish has an inspirational story behind his efforts

Paul leaves behind unhealthy lifestyle to tackle world's toughest triathlon

A KENT man is taking on what has been described as "the world's hardest triathlon".

He will be attempting the Arch To Arc event on Sunday, September 14, raising money for the charity Aspire.

He has a personal connection to the charity, working as its director of fund-raising and marketing.

The epic event starts with an 87-mile run from London's Marble Arch and is followed by a swim across the English Channel.

The final part of the triathlon is a 180-mile bike-ride to Paris's Arc de Triomphe.

Just 14 people have managed to complete the event in the past 14 years - Parrish will be the oldest person to take part in the gruelling challenge.

He thinks that he will be able to do it but is concerned by the swim, saying: "The Channel is monstrous - a quite ridiculous undertaking in its own right.

"It is the equivalent in effort of running 87 miles and then being asked to jog up Everest... before the cycling."

As part of his three-year training regime, Parrish has taken part in a double-ironman (4.8-mile swim, 224-mile cycle-ride and a 52-mile run) and two triple-iron distances (7.2-mile swim, 336-mile bike-ride and 78-mile run, which is continuous with no breaks).

What makes the attempt even

more striking is that Parrish has not always been this fit.

Just 13 years ago, he weighed 15 and a half stone and was drinking and smoking to what had been identified as life-threatening levels.

"He suffered from breathlessness and got pins and needles while climbing stairs.

He said: "I guess I am testament to the fact that within us we have the chance to change.

"It isn't easy - I would never say that, but it is possible.

"And trust me, it is far preferable to carrying on with a destructive life pattern.

"I would like to show people like me that there is hope and that some of the same attributes that keep them drinking and smoking can be used to aid a better life of personal achievement."

He chose to do the challenge to raise funds for Aspire, a spinal-injury charity, because of the inspirational people who surround him.

He said: "People sometimes say that what I do is inspiring, but every day that I am at work I am surrounded by staff and spinally-injured people who are truly inspirational.

"I am privileged to be able to do what I do and it is an honour to support Aspire."

Anyone who would like to sponsor Parrish can do so at www.justgiving.com/PaulParrishArch2Arc.

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